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A
CURSORY VIEW
OF
CIVIL GOVERNMENT;
CHIEFLY IN RELATION TO
VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS.

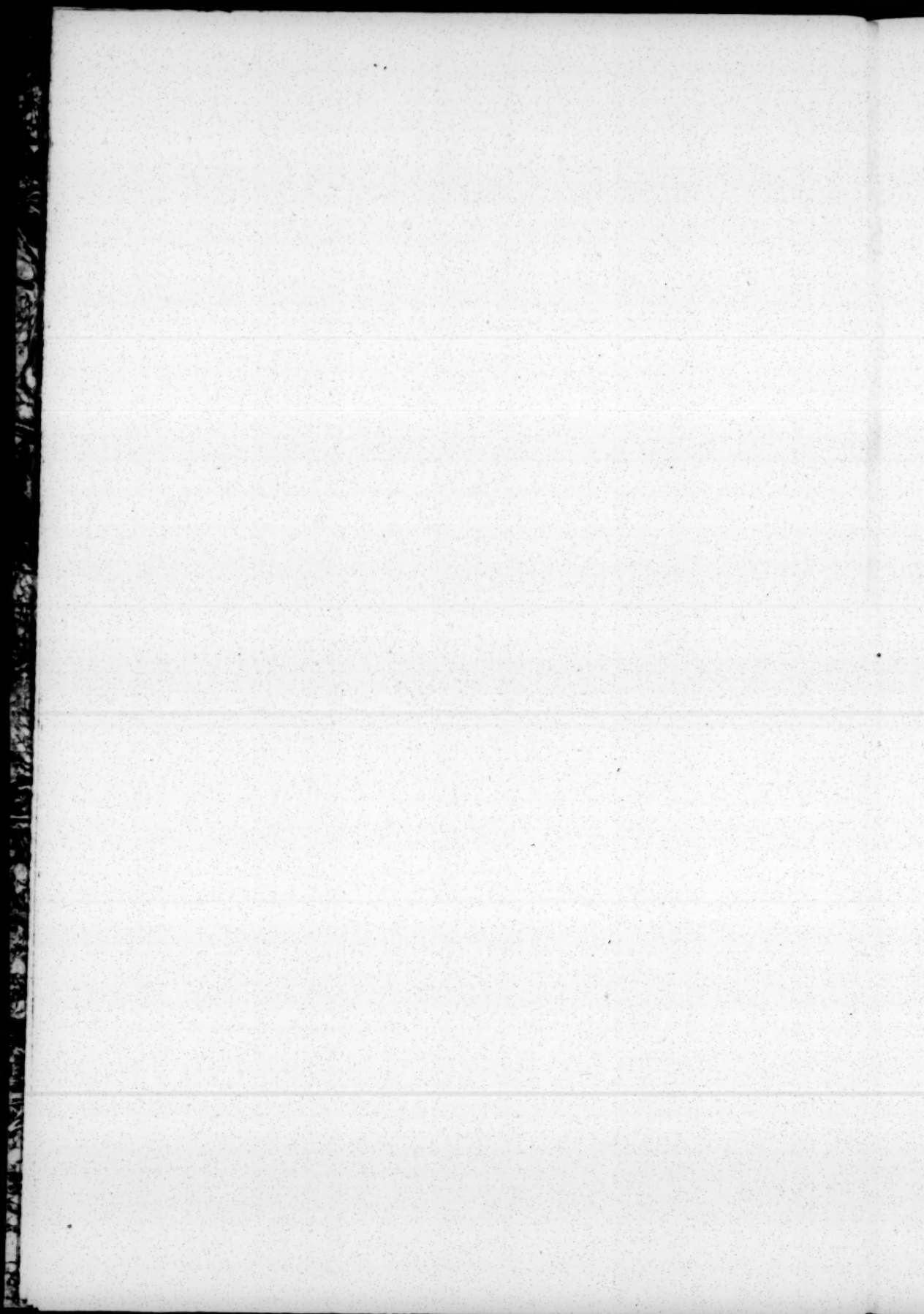
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PREFACE.

AFTER many able attempts of political writers to shew the influence of civil government upon the power and wealth of nations, I here presume to offer to the world a few thoughts upon the relation it bears to objects of far more importance, and from which all others must derive their value.

In the present extraordinary state of human affairs, when the whole frame of society may seem almost in danger of a dissolution, from the mischievous ferments occasioned by

some novel principles of political and moral philosophy ; an endeavour, though from the pen of an obscure individual, to abate these disorders, in a way of all others the most effectual, by directing the minds of men to a view of their true duty and interest; has certainly some claim to public indulgence.

Should there be any reader who shall feel himself disappointed, by finding nothing new, or nothing perhaps that is not already familiar to his reflections, in the ensuing strictures ; yet supposing them on the whole to be just, he will be pleased to consider, in excuse for their publication, that every man is not in a like habit and train of thinking, that it is incident even to the greatest minds

minds to lose sight of the end in attending to the means, especially when these happen to be such as are suited powerfully to strike the imagination, and interest the passions; which is frequently the case of political subjects and discussions. The debates of senates, the councils of princes, the arrangements of war and peace, are matters of so great a sound, and carry in their front such a shew of consequence, that few are able so far to resist the impression, as to regard them with a steady reference to their proper use, namely, the advancement of the real virtue and happiness of mankind; which is the only just end of all human purposes and endeavours. To recal and attach the attention to this great object, is the design of the following pages; which

which I now dismiss with the artless and conciliating declaration of an apocryphal author: *If I have done well, and as is fitting the subject, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto* *.

JANUARY 12, 1797.

* 2 Maccabees [in the close.]

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A
CURSORY VIEW
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SECTION I.
INTRODUCTION.

TO determine the practical efficiency of any art, it is necessary to consider, besides the art abstractedly in itself, the materials with which it is provided. It is demonstrable in speculative mechanics, that the smallest power may be so applied as to balance the greatest weight; yet no engine was ever constructed that could put an atom in equilibrium with a mountain; nor can any skill in architecture erect a house as

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commodious and durable with mud and straw as with good brick and cement: so likewise the political art is limited in its effects by the subject on which it operates, namely, man, his natural powers, and moral dispositions.

Some who have formed flattering ideas of their own species, are forward to charge the miseries of society chiefly on defective legislation. They will not allow that any incurable perverseness in human nature is perpetually thwarting, and oftentimes defeating the end of the best institutions. On the contrary, they affect to persuade us, that were a right system of polity established, but few evils would remain to disturb human life; neither poverty, nor toil, nor oppression would any longer be known; every one would sit contented under *his own vine and fig-tree* in all the dignity of independence.

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Though it is not probable this was ever seriously believed, yet men being generally dissatisfied with their condition, and unwilling to discover the cause in themselves, they are disposed to seek it in things around them, and sometimes boldly to resolve it into the unhappy state of the public. The inequity and partial execution of the laws, the expence of government, the corruption and incapacity of ministers, the inadequate representation of the people, the discouragement of commerce, and the want of general liberty and equality, are perversely represented as the great sources of private calamity.

That the happiness of every member of civil society is partly dependent on its government and laws, cannot justly be disputed; nor that it is the duty of those who are intrusted with the care of the public, to do all in their power to

promote its welfare, by relieving its burdens, by duly enforcing former regulations, and framing such as are wanting; for it is not to be supposed that any nation ever yet arrived at that pitch of political perfection as not to be capable of further improvements.

But while the ruler is proposing to himself the best models, and endeavouring to copy them as closely as possible, the subject should learn to regulate his expectations by what is practicable in the existing circumstances; he should consider, that all Utopian theories, however pleasing in contemplation, are dangerous in their tendency, as by laying a ground for disappointment they are calculated to generate secret discontents, which may proceed to open murmurs, to seditions, to rebellions, to anarchy and ruin. Every man, therefore, should beware how he listens to such fantastic theories

theories as may lead him to sacrifice real blessings to delusive hopes, and thus lose the substance by catching at the shadow.

Let us then endeavour calmly to consider, not what might be done if men were what they ought to be, disposed to universal benevolence, and submissive to reason and justice, but what is fairly to be expected in the present actual state of human nature.

A few general strictures on man may therefore not unfitly introduce the following discourse.

Man, at his entrance into the world, is little superior to a mere animal. His pains and his pleasures are confined to his senses; if these are gratified, he is at rest; if craving, he is unquiet and clamorous; his appetites are under no direction from reason or choice, and the

infant flies to his mother's breast at the single impulse of nature, as the young of other animals to the dug; and, if deprived of his proper nourishment, he manifests the same kind of uneasiness.

After a short time, however, he must be diverted as well as fed; his rattle will become hardly less necessary to keep him in good humour than the satisfying of his hunger.

From this early power of the senses arises the great difficulty of education. Before the mind has well arrived at a capacity of instruction, it is preoccupied with the ideas of animal gratification and infantine amusement, which, by constantly soliciting the attention, often render it an office of much labour and patience to imprint the first rudiments of learning.

As imagination gains force, the influence of sensible objects is further augmented. This magic faculty will lend a charm to the merest trifles; and, to a child of six years old, convert a hobby-horse or a puppet-show into objects as delightful, as the pride of equipage or the enchantment of a masquerade are to children more advanced. Thus the love of pleasure, and the passions in general, are wonderfully promoted by this illusory power, which, by a silent and rapid progress, almost establishes its empire before reason has acquired strength to resist its course.

When the season of youth arrives, in which nature inflames the imagination, and is inflamed by it to the highest degree, the love of pleasure commonly works with impetuous violence; nor does its rage always terminate at this period; it continues frequently through middle life,

and sometimes pursues unhappy mortals to that season when the powers of gratification are enfeebled and broken. To estimate its strength, let us for a moment consider the several mounds and barriers which, in its passage, it forces or surmounts.

It overbears all regard to temporal interest. How often will a young man, with the brightest prospect of success before him, be drawn aside by the lure of sensual indulgence from the road of sober industry to wander in forbidden paths, in spite of every remonstrance of his friends, or the secret bodings of his own mind, that his roving will end in poverty or a jail. Nor is it only in preventing the acquisition of wealth that the seduction of pleasure operates; it also consumes many a fair inheritance: families that have shone with lustre for ages are thus sometimes suddenly eclipsed; and

and those who were born to splendid expectations compelled to hire out themselves for bread.

It overbears all regard to reputation. This is the more observable, because a man may run to great excesses, may violate all the laws of sobriety and decency that are not adopted into the code of fashion, without forfeiting his character in the world. And yet such often is the madness of appetite, that it will brook no restraint whatever, divine or human; will both provoke the displeasure of heaven, and the disgrace and contempt of men.

It will also surmount all regard to health and to life itself. What numbers are thus made to pine away in disease, and brought untimely to their graves, is obvious to the most careless observation. And if we enquire into our public executions,

cutions, many of the wretched sufferers will be found among the victims of pleasure.

In the last place, it is commonly an overmatch for reason in its highest improvement. It might have been expected that after the first fervors of imagination were abated, the intellectual power would gradually have assumed its just dominion over the propensities of animal nature. Instead of this, even after a long training in the schools of philosophers, and the further instruction of experience, it is often found degraded into a mean spy for appetite, or a suborned advocate to justify its excesses. Among the most celebrated heathen sages we meet with few without a taint of gross depravity; and what is a more awful illustration of this argument, he who has been accounted the wisest of mankind, who, in addition to the highest human endowments, enjoyed

joyed the advantages of divine revelation,
fell a prey to his sensual passions !

The next great principle by which man is actuated is the *love of consequence*, or of appearing considerable in the eyes of the world ; with which is connected a desire of distinction and superiority ; since he who is on a level with others attracts no particular notice or regard. This principle discovers itself very early ; a child, upon receiving any mark of distinction he is capable of understanding, immediately feels his importance, and is ready to exact a degree of homage from his companions. Nor will this humour unless timely restrained be confined to his fellows ; little master, by improving every attention paid him, will soon learn to dictate to the servants at home, and perhaps come to give law to the whole house. What Themistocles observed jestingly of his son, that “ he was chief of the Greeks,
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by governing his mother, who governed him, who governed all the rest," is too often realized within the circle of domestic life.

If we look into our public schools, we shall find few instances of remarkable progress which may not be ascribed to a spirit of emulation. To become the first in a school or in a class will generally prove a more powerful stimulus to application than all the beauties of Homer and Virgil. This ambition of pre-eminence, this love of *excelling* more than of excellence, accompanies every stage and condition of human life.

It is not indeed every man that naturally wishes to be a poet or a philosopher, a judge or a bishop, the general of an army or a minister of state; but who does not wish to be a great man *somewhere*? or does not affect to be chief in
some

some system, however small and inconsiderable? And it must be confessed there is scarce any man so disgraced of nature, unfavoured by education, or depressed by fortune, that will not, if he can find his place, obtain a degree of consequence.

No regular society is likely to subsist long unless the point of precedence be firmly established; which is seldom done without contest. For every member striving for mastery, if he cannot attain the first place, will approach it as nearly as possible; nor till he has thoroughly tried his strength, and perhaps suffered many defeats, will he fall into his proper rank. Nay I think it may be questioned, whether many examples can be produced of a lasting friendship between two persons, without a tacit demand of superiority on the one part, and a generous compliance with it on the other.

And

And it is not only in the stated intercourse of life, but on the most accidental occasions, that people like to display their consequence. Let two travellers who never met before, and may never meet again, pass only a few hours together at the same inn or in the same stage-coach, and there will probably be some exhibition of this nature. In whatever circumstances of society a man is placed, he would be apt to impress a considerable idea of himself.

Nor is it inconsistent with this, that persons will sometimes voluntarily incur degradation and contempt; which may arise from an occasional prevalence of some other principle over pride, or may be no more than a stratagem of this passion itself. Many cringe to a man in power only to rival or supplant him; or if their ambition soar not so high, they seek a compensation for the indignities they

they encounter, in the consequence derived from an access to greatness amongst those who are placed at a distance.

Again, whence chiefly arise the wars and violent contentions amongst men, but from the cause we are now considering? While like Pompey and Cæsar, some will not endure an equal, nor others a superior; or rather while all are striving for pre-eminence: man naturally affecting dominion over man, and endeavouring to subdue every other will to his own. Hence the assertion, *that a state of nature is a state of war*, in a qualified sense is true; taking war as softened and mitigated by an infusion of equity and humanity. For in his present condition,

“ Under hope of heavenly grace, and God-proclaiming peace;”

Man is not utterly abandoned to his vile and malignant passions.

As

As all men aspire after authority themselves, they are consequently disposed to resist it in others ; and if they cannot govern, are willing to be as little governed as possible. It is the same spirit which in different circumstances produces hard masters and disobedient servants, tyrannic rulers and rebellious subjects.

Nor is this spirit confined to the competitions of civil life ; it invades the retreats of the learned, and kindles intellectual war among grammarians and critics, historians and poets, philosophers and metaphysicians ; nay it early invaded the church itself, producing heresies, schisms, and persecutions, and under the management of a succession of men, styling themselves *servants of the servants of God*, grew into a system of tyranny beyond what the world had before known, extending itself over both soul and body, over this life and the life to come. Surely there

there must be a strange power in this ambitious principle, which could thus make its way in opposition to a religion whose foundation is humility, and whose perfection, charity; and even convert that religion itself into an engine for accomplishing its own purposes.

However he may stand in the opinion of others, there is scarce any man who does not appear considerable to himself; he discovers some endowment of nature, some acquired ability, or circumstance of fortune on which to ground his importance. If not distinguished by the inventive power of genius, he finds this defect compensated by a solid understanding; if he cannot, like a certain Greek, raise a small village into a great city, he can do what it seems that Greek could not, play upon the lute; if he has neither to boast of place nor pension, he may perhaps pride himself as an indepen-

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dent country gentleman ; or if destitute of all external advantage and conscious of none within, he will still imagine some latent excellency, which, if happily brought to light, would elevate him to enviable distinction.

I shall only observe further on this head, that other passions seem more subject to intermission ; a miser may sometimes forget his hoards, and a debauchee his pleasures, but when is it that the love of consequence is not stirring in the human heart !

The last principle I shall consider is *the love of wealth*. This is entirely foreign and adventitious. Wealth is not primarily sought for its own sake, but merely as an instrument for obtaining pleasure or consequence, though gradually it becomes a final object. The process may be illustrated in a familiar instance. Give
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some pieces of money to a child; he may be pleased with them for their colour, their figure, or the characters drawn upon them, and that is all; a few shining pebbles might do as well; but when he finds they will procure him sweet-meats and other little gratifications, of which he is naturally fond, besides adding to his consequence among his companions, he begins to view money in another light; from its association with things of themselves agreeable a new lustre is reflected upon it, and it becomes an object of desire on its own account. And thus an adventitious passion is generated, which in its progress often acquires a strength, which neither any other passion, though implanted by nature, nor the most vigorous reason, is able effectually to resist.

A young man, upon entering the world, is apt to place a generous confidence in his fellow-creatures, which is rarely with-

drawn till he has learned by time and experience that men are generally not much to be depended on in cases of exigency, and least of all where pecuniary assistance is wanted. He then finds they will be liberal of their advice, but very sparing of their money. This must give him an impression of its value which he had not before. He is also apt to presume upon himself, and to imagine that his merits and address will be sufficient to extricate him out of all difficulties; and when he finds that there are occasions in which a few pounds would do him more service than all his virtues and endowments, this will naturally enforce powerfully upon him the expediency of pecuniary resources.

During the former part of life, pleasure being the great object of pursuit, it is in order to obtain it that money is eagerly sought and as eagerly squandered. Avarice

rice shews itself not often in this season, and when it does, it is only in a mind base and groveling, and from which nothing great or excellent, even in the order of this world, is to be expected.

The ardour of passion in youth is commonly succeeded by the ambition of consequence in middle age. When a man is arrived at this period, and as from an eminence looks around upon the world, and beholds some, though endowed with every virtue and talent, abandoned to obscurity because they are poor, while others, though destitute both of talents and virtue, with a golden key in their hand open themselves a way to power and distinction, must he not be tempted to imagine *that money answereth all things?* not only serving to give lustre to merit, but where it is wanting, to supply its place.

As a man's consequence is generally proportioned to his appearance in the world, wealth which can always command external splendor, possesses irresistible attractions in the eyes of those who have no force of intrinsic merit to make them considerable. To such, in gazing upon it, all that it can purchase rises up as in vision, manors, lordships, stately houses, sumptuous equipages, with a long train of needy dependants and flattering admirers. Hence it cannot fail to become an object of eager pursuit to minds vain and ambitious, and undisciplined in the school of wisdom.

Avarice is properly the vice of age. In the first part of life, as we have already observed, money is sought chiefly for pleasure, and in the next for consequence; but in the last stage, it is sought for its own sake. Avarice is the dead sea into which all the other passions disembody. When

When a man has lost all relish for the enjoyments of sense, when his heart is become dead to the feelings of tenderness and friendship, when he has conceived a general distrust of mankind, and all his worldly prospects are closed; unless some supernatural light open to him a view into a better world, what remains for him but to cling closely to his wealth, to hug this idol in the dark, and *to say to gold thou art my hope, and to fine gold thou art my confidence!*

This I take to be a just sketch of human nature in general; for there are doubtless many individual exceptions. All young men are not equally addicted to pleasure; some lean more to ambition; and we may now and then encounter, what seems most out of nature, a young griping miser. So in middle life, though this is eminently the season of ambition, it is not unfrequently either wasted by

pleasure, or consumed by avarice. And we are sometimes shocked with a lewd or ambitious or thriftless old age. Yet notwithstanding such exceptions, the above representation I think is fairly drawn from life and experience.

Nor does religion itself totally extirpate the evils we have been considering; and if religion fail of this effect, it is in vain to expect it from human discipline. In the best of men some fibres of depravity remain, exhibiting melancholy proof of its stubborn inveteracy. But whatever be the influence of religion upon its true disciples, the number of such is too small materially to affect the present argument.

We may therefore conclude, without any danger of incurring the charge of libelling human nature, That the love of pleasure, the love of consequence, and the
love

love of wealth are the most prevailing passions amongst men, and are likely to continue, for any thing to the contrary appearing in the present state of the world.

SECTION II.

OF THE IMMEDIATE ENDS OF GOVERNMENT, AND HOW FAR THEY ARE ATTAINABLE.

HAVING thus premised a few general observations on man, the subject to be governed, it may be proper, before we proceed to our main design, briefly to consider the more *immediate* ends of government, and how far they are capable of being accomplished.

Order is the beauty and strength of society: look at ten thousand men in the confusion of a mob, and after they are reduced into a well-disciplined army, and you will see a striking illustration of this position.

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Among beings endued with liberty, no regular society can long subsist if every one is left to his own direction : the diversity of their inclinations, and the limitation of their views, must produce perpetual interference, without some common rule by which to regulate their actions.

What form of society would have taken place in a state of innocence, of which such evident traces remain in the writings even of Pagan antiquity, can be only matter of conjecture. As no crimes would have existed, there would have been no need of criminal jurisdiction ; nor of coercive power, when every one stood prompt to the performance of his duty. This is beautifully represented by Ovid, in the following passage of his *Metamorphoses*, which, though familiar to boys at school, deserves to be here recited ;

“ Aurea

" Aurea prima fata est ætas, quæ vindice nullo;
Sponte suâ sine lege fidem rectumque colebat.
Pœna metusque aberant, nec verba minacia
fixo

Ære legebantur : nec supplex turba timebat
Judicis ora sui ; sed erant sine vindice tuti*."

Lib. i.

Yet some regulations even in this state
might be necessary. We learn from
scripture, whence probably many of the
fables of Heathen poets are a corrupt
derivation, that the first man, pure as he

* " The golden age was first, when man yet new, }
No rule but uncorrupted reason knew,
And with a native bent did good pursue. }
Unforc'd by punishment, unaw'd by fear,
His words were simple, and his soul sincere.
Needless was written law where none oppress'd,
The law of right was written in his breast.
No suppliant crowds before the judge appear'd, }
No court erected yet, nor cause was heard : }
But all was safe, for conscience was their guard."

DRYDEN.

came

came from the hands of his Maker, was placed in the garden of Eden *to dress and to keep it*; which service, whatever it meant, must doubtless have belonged equally to his offspring; and those portions of the soil upon which any of them had separately bestowed their care, would seem in consequence to have become, in some measure, exclusive property. And if, by the expression *to dress and to keep*, is to be understood, besides mere embellishment, a degree of productive labour, there might be required, for the due distribution of the produce, some settled law or rule, which, as the earth at large grew more peopled, would appear to become still more necessary: and generally, in all the intercourse and transactions of such a state, where the law of nature was silent, or not express, some positive regulations might at least be expedient.

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If, therefore, the need of some political regimen must be admitted, in order to a state of society, though every individual was disposed to concur in promoting the common welfare, it must now be more highly necessary to the same end, when almost every one concentrates his regards in himself.

The immediate ends of political union appear to be the following :

- 1st. Personal liberty.
- 2dly. Personal security.
- 3dly. Private property.
- 4thly. Public decorum.

The three former require only to be named: upon the last a remark may not be improper.

No rational policy will permit the dignity of society to be violated, or its peace disturbed, by notorious profligacy,

by tumult or riot, although not attended with any actual infringement of liberty or property. Such licence ought not to be suffered to infest even a village ; much less should it be tolerated in a nation at large. Mr. Locke himself, who is known to be a strenuous advocate for freedom, makes it part of the office of the magistrate to punish debauchery and immorality, and compel men to lead *sober and honest lives* *. And notwithstanding the increase of light and liberality since his time, open and scandalous vice still continues in this country to be an object of political animadversion, and will ever so remain, unless reason and virtue should entirely withdraw themselves from amongst us, and leave us a prey to barbarism and false philosophy.

How far, or whether at all the magistrate ought to interpose in the affairs of

* Third letter on Toleration, p. 85-6, and 282-3.
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religion, is a question of greater difficulty. If it be said, that every man must be directed by his conscience, whatever be his station or circumstances; let it on the other side be observed, that when conscience is erroneous, all that is done in obedience to it must partake of its viciousness and obliquity. It is possible the magistrate may seriously think it his duty to use *force* in matters of religion; yet if his persuasion rests upon insufficient grounds, such an application of force would be wrong and unjustifiable. It is not enough for a religious intolerant to plead conscience; it remains for him still to enquire *how he came by his conscience*; whether it was formed corruptly or negligently, or upon the principles of piety and charity, after due examination and circumspection. By proceeding in this manner, he may be led to discover, that his conscience is little better than a misguided zeal, or perhaps a mere illusion

sion of superstition or enthusiasm, that has served for a pretext to his pride, or some worldly interest: and the more his place in society is consequential and elevated, the more is such an enquiry of importance both to himself and others. The celebrated author above cited is of opinion, that religion is entirely beyond the competence of civil government; I mean not on this occasion to enter into his argument, which, so far as it goes to the exclusion of coercive authority in respect to *articles of faith and modes of worship*, I believe, in the present times, will generally be admitted. I cannot, however, forbear to observe, what I imagine will meet with little opposition, that we ought to look upon that nation as the most highly favoured, in which the best provision is made for instruction in true religion, without injury to individuals, or the disturbance of public order and tranquillity.

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We may now go on briefly to enquire how far the ends of civil government above stated, are capable of being accomplished.

Personal liberty consists in the power of loco-motion, or of going *when* and *where* we please ; which power, from the very constitution of civil society, cannot be enjoyed in the same degree by every individual.

No large community can long subsist without a considerable part of its members being destined to laborious situations and dependent circumstances : It cannot subsist without food and cloathing, and these cannot be obtained without labour ; and men generally will not labour but upon the urgency of necessity. If every man was provided with a stock of the necessaries of life, or had wealth to purchase them, we should see few shuttles

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in motion, and few ploughs turning up the soil, till the time came when having wasted their resources, distress would compel some to the loom and others to the field.

In a civilized state, besides cloathing and food, much domestic service is necessary, of which a great part being neither elegant nor unlaborious, will not commonly be performed by those who can avoid it; which all may do who are under no immediate pressure or fear of want. Therefore, without such a degree of indigence in society as may dispose some to undergo the daily drudgery of life, and such a degree of affluence as may enable others to reward them for it, we could expect to find but little either of domestic neatness or comfort.

Want in the political machine is the weight necessary to keep it in motion ;

and all that can or ought to be done is duly to regulate it.

Hence it will follow, that to preserve society from sinking into a savage state, in which every man must be content to fish and hunt for himself, and to wear the skin of the beast he has slain, a large proportion of the people must depend for their subsistence on the toils of husbandry, on useful manufactures, and domestic service; which implies the relation of master and servant, of those who have nothing but their labour to bring to market, and of those who come with a price in their hands to purchase it.

If we apply these remarks to the case of personal liberty, it will appear, that in every civil society, whatever be its form and construction, this power of loco-motion in the majority of its members must necessarily be confined within
narrow

narrow limits. Persons whose support depends on sedentary employments, or on their occupation within the compass of a house or a farm, will not find themselves much at liberty to travel or roam abroad. To these inevitable causes of restraint are to be added such as are unnecessary and oppressive, whose operation in multitudes of cases, occurring in families and the various intercourse of life, no human laws can prevent or remedy.

That portion of personal liberty which remains after these deductions, is all that the very constitution of society will permit to be enjoyed by the bulk of a people. Individuals who are placed beyond the necessity of constant labour, will be more at large ; and those few who are amply provided, may ramble round the world at their pleasure, without any impediments except those arising from the want of bodily vigour, the interposition of hills

and vallics, with other inconveniencies, which no exertions of society can entirely remove. The value of this liberty we may see hereafter.

Next to personal liberty we have placed personal security, or the peaceable enjoyment of life, health, and character.

Almost every government affords a tolerable security for life and limb. By the dread of just punishment which it creates, with the horror inspired by nature for deeds of blood, the hand of the ruffian is powerfully restrained, and the quiet citizen is left at liberty to go about his lawful business with little danger of personal violence.

A wise policy may likewise contribute much towards the health of a people, by various methods and regulations, too many and too minute to be here specified.

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Among the principal we may reckon the checks it imposes on luxury and vice ; the encouragement of agriculture and other manly occupations, in order to lessen the number of sedentary employments, and to reduce the extent and population of cities and large towns, which are the graves of the human species ; above all, the affording of due countenance to piety and virtue, which, according to one of our medical philosophers, contain the true secret of health and long life.

These, however, are blessings, after every provision that can be made, of a very precarious nature. No man need be told that in every stage of his journey he is exposed to the incursions of innumerable mischances and calamities, against which it would be in vain to look for protection to laws and government, or to any human power or prudence.

All that these can do is to plant a guard, oftentimes weak and insufficient, at a few of the avenues of disease and mortality, while a thousand others are left naked and without defence.

And in respect to the last particular we have classed under this head, it is obvious to observe, that no delicacy of health can be more alive to the impressions of the atmosphere, than the tenderness of reputation is sensible to fame and rumour. Every day shews us, that the least breath of calumny is enough to injure, and a violent blast entirely to ruin the most established character.

The love of consequence we have seen is a prevailing passion in man; and reputation, by which we hold a place in the good opinion of others, may be considered as a species of consequence. The desire of this is natural; and when it is
fought

fought by laudable qualities and actions, and with a due reference to God as the fountain of all excellence and true honour, it becomes an allowable and virtuous ambition.

When a man has so far lost a proper regard to his Creator as to be actuated by no higher motive than a desire of surpassing others, there is no meanness or injustice of which he is not capable. He will be disposed to view with jealousy a rising reputation, though it should not obstruct his own; in case of rivalry, if he cannot fairly outstrip a competitor he will employ every art to supplant him; and if compelled to own his superiority, he will accompany the acknowledgement with every circumstance of invidious derogation. Nor is competition for wealth or pleasure less disparaging and injurious than emulation of excellence.

There are few things more the sport of ordinary conversation than the good name of the absent. To indulge a sally of wit or a momentary triumph of vanity, to gratify a sudden emotion of envy, or even from mere wantonness and caprice, the character of a neighbour or friend is lightly treated or injuriously depreciated. To moralists in every age this has been a standing topic of complaint, as involving no small part of the misery of human life.

Yet these are evils which must generally be suffered, to avoid still greater; and indeed are such as seldom fall properly within the competence of government. If every word or action that might be construed into defamation or injustice, was liable to a civil process, human life would become a scene of perpetual litigation, a gloomy suspicion would hang over our social intercourse, the harmless pleasantries of familiar conversation would be checked,
while

while ingenious malice would still continue to diffuse its poison in a manner too subtle for legal cognizance.

In regard to *property* let it be first observed, that if the great law which commands us *to love our neighbour as ourselves* had universally prevailed, a community of goods might not have been inconsistent with public order, since every man would then have readily furnished his contingent of labour, and required no more from the common stock than a moderate supply of his wants.

In such a state of mutual benevolence a nation would have resembled children of the same family, and their dwellings so many apartments in the same house; no bars and bolts would have been necessary to prevent violent intrusion, and they would have sat down at each other's table with the familiarity of brethren.

The

The world however at present is too much under the rule of selfish passions to admit of such an intercommunity. There would be so many drones in the hive, that the labouring bees would never be able to furnish the supplies; which alone, omitting other considerations, shews the expediency if not the necessity of that policy, by which every one enjoys his *peculium* under the common protection of the community.

For a man to possess something that he can say is *mine*, to sit down in his own house as in a castle, and quietly eat the fruit of his own labour, or enjoy his paternal inheritance without fear of injury or annoyance, is a blessing which can be duly estimated by those only who have experienced the insecurity of a tyrannic or savage state. Even merely to contemplate a constitution of society, which communicates this blessing to
millions,

millions, must yield an exquisite satisfaction to every mind that is sensible to order and general happiness.

Yet let it be remembered that in spite of all laws and precautions, riches of whatever kind are not exempt from the common instability of other sublunary things; they are exposed to continual frauds and depredations; to innumerable casualties; so great is their uncertainty as if it grew out of their own nature: *They make themselves wings, says Solomon, they fly away* *.

With relation to the distribution of property, the best possible state of society seems to be, when the bulk of a people can subsist comfortably with moderate labour, and cannot subsist without it. And indeed no society can enjoy much

* Prov. xxiii. 5.

permanency beyond this ; for suppose it elevated a few degrees higher, whether by a sudden influx of wealth or by any other means, the number of idle hands that would thus be thrown upon it, and the consequent deficiency of labour, would probably soon reduce it more below its proper situation, than it had been raised above it.

There is no way that I know of for the body of citizens to relieve themselves of the necessity of labour but by a most detestable division of mankind into free-men and slaves ; by which the one part constitute themselves the lords and tyrants of the other. This we know was a practice with the most celebrated republics of antiquity, and notwithstanding the greater light and liberty of the present times, is still a practice ; which however we have reason to hope is drawing to a close by a total and final abolition.

We

We proceed now to consider for a moment, how far the coercive power of government is adequate to the maintenance of public decorum, which is chiefly violated in the following respects:

First by *lewdness* and *debauchery*. So violent is the propension of mankind to sensual indulgence that no human laws can always restrain them from open and scandalous excesses; much less from discovering their depravity by the dubious turn of their conversation, and the general stile of their behaviour. And in regard to that great medium of communication the press, unless very severe and perhaps unwise restrictions were laid upon it, the corruption of authors will be sure to make it an engine of obscenity as well as of other mischiefs, at least in a covert and delicate manner, which being less shocking to our moral feelings, is suited to spread the contagion with greater effect.

Secondly,

Secondly, by *gaming*: Which, although it has no particular ground in human nature, and is no more than an accidental determination of its general propensity to dissipation, when it has once made its way into society and obtained the sanction of fashion, is not easily to be suppressed or even checked by the wisest government. Of this we have a striking example in our own country, where, in spite of many discouraging statutes *, it prevails to an alarming degree, defeating every provision of law by a principle of false honour, which has often a strange influence with men who possess but little sense either of virtue or decency.

Thirdly, by *profaneness*: By this I understand a contemptuous disregard to the being and providence of God, which commonly shews itself by using his name

* See Blackstone's Comm. Vol. IV. p. 172, 3.
with

with irreverence, and neglecting his worship. Mr. Boyle is said never to have mentioned the name of God without a visible pause in his discourse; and whoever does it with habitual levity, discovers a mind destitute of every religious principle. The neglect of public, which I fear is almost always accompanied with an equal neglect of domestic, worship, may be thought no less chargeable with profaneness; as it seems to insinuate, either that there is no God, or that our obligations to him require no such acknowledgement, or that we are too indolent or too proud to offer it; for we can hardly admit with some, that the heart may be inspired with devotion when so considerable an expression of it is wanting. And were this indeed possible, such abstracted piety by assuming the appearance of irreligion must have the same effect upon others, and on this account be very culpably deficient. The small success of

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the methods taken by our legislature to remedy these evils, shews how little can be expected from fines and penalties, in those points which relate to our most important interests.

Fourthly, *by a want of due respect to the constitution, whether religious or civil, under which we live.* To treat the establishments of our country with insolence or scurrility, or even as subjects of mere disputation, is manifestly an offence to public decency; although such grave discussion as may serve to their correction or improvement, is not only consistent with the regard we owe them, but may proceed from it. How to suppress the former without discouraging the latter, is a difficulty to which no policy is equal. There have been periods when prescription was reason, and when time gave a sanction to the grossest usurpations upon the persons and property, the understandings

derstandings and consciences of men ; there have been periods too in which a wild and lawless spirit has gone forth, and boldly called in question every opinion consecrated by the veneration, and every institution confirmed by the practice of former ages. If men could have been taught wisdom by past example, by this time they would have learned, first, in respect to truth, to have sought it, though without indeed a superstitious attachment, yet not without a becoming deference to ancient opinions ; and secondly, in respect to government, rulers would have learned to act for the people, and the people to submit chearfully to lawful and moderate government. The fact is, that till some great revolution take place in human nature the world will go on at its old rate, will continue to be swayed by its interests and passions, and perpetually be vibrating between truth and error,

tyranny and licence, in spite of all the efforts of patriots and philosophers.

Fifthly, by *incivility*. It has been often justly observed that the miseries of the present life arise not so much from great calamities which but seldom happen, as from a succession of small vexations which fret a man's spirit, exhaust his patience, and so bring him into a state of perpetual irritation. Whatever therefore tends to obviate these petty evils highly deserves the attention of every one who either values his own quiet or that of others. On this account civility is an object of important consideration, as it serves to prevent those minute offences which are so apt to disturb our friendly intercourse, and frequently to convert it into a state of secret animosity or of open hostility. Man is a being who naturally demands respect, and often suffers more patiently a substantial injury than a slight contempt,

which if unnoticed would neither affect his reputation nor his fortune. How deeply the resentment of such shadowy offences may penetrate the human heart, we have a striking example in the story of Haman, who, because Mordecai the Jew refused him those tokens of honour paid him by others, lost all enjoyment of himself and of his elevated condition, and conceived the dreadful purpose of revenging upon a whole nation his quarrel with an obscure stranger. This instance is only singular by its magnitude. There are few persons I fear who may not look back upon certain conjunctures when their revenge has been excited, their nights disturbed, and all their comforts embittered, because some unlucky Mordecai had denied them that respect they thought their due ; nor is it very uncommon for men of false honour to put to hazard the lives of others as well as their own, for the sake of chastising some petty

insult or ceremonious neglect. Hence then appears the importance of attending to the usual forms of civility among beings so ready to give and to take offence. Of this the Chinese are so sensible, that at Peking there is a court established for regulating the ceremonial of the empire, both among natives and strangers. This punctilious regard to manners is strongly marked in one of their volumes, which contains, as we are told, no less than three thousand rules for the behaviour of persons of every rank, and upon every occasion.

Now though all these regulations could in every instance be reduced exactly to practice, which is evidently impossible, there would yet remain, as will easily be conceived, numberless ways of conveying insult, which the formality of respect would only render still more provoking. Human nature is a Proteus that cannot be held by any merely outward con-

straint: nothing short of a moral revolution, in which pride gives place to humility and selfishness to benevolence, can produce a genuine and uniform civility of manners.

These few remarks may suffice, concerning the influence of civil government upon liberty, security, property, and external decorum, which we have stated to be its first and immediate objects; the relation it bears to religion will often come under our consideration in the following parts of this discourse.

SECTION III.

CONTAINING OBSERVATIONS RELATING TO
THE INFLUENCE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT
UPON THE MORAL IMPROVEMENT AND
HAPPINESS OF MANKIND, WITH COLLA-
TERAL STRICTURES.

WHATEVER does not tend to make men better and happier is of no value ; liberty and property *, the wealth and glory of nations, are of no worth but as they serve to promote the virtue and comfort of mankind.

Let us then first enquire how far liberty in general, and civil liberty in particular,

* *Liberty and property* are sometimes understood to comprize the whole end of government, politically considered, and in this section they are taken in their greatest extent.

which

which in the ancient republics of Greece and Rome was so highly extolled, and which is said to be the very end and scope of the constitution of this country * is conducive to the advancement of these great objects.

The liberty of every agent must be limited by his power; the liberty of doing any thing necessarily presupposing the power of doing it; hence that being only whose power is infinite possesses absolute liberty.

Whatsoever God determinately wills to do, is done. He spake and the earth was, he commanded and it stood fast: he said, *Let there be light and there was light* †. In respect to all other beings

* See Montesqu. de l'esprit des loix, liv. 11. ch. 5; and Blackstone's Com. Introduction.

† Pl. xxxiii. 9.—Gen. i. 3.

their volitions are only efficient within a certain sphere marked out by their Creator.

Man apparently holding the lowest place in the scale of rational existence, it is probable his liberty corresponds to his situation, and is consequently of less extent than what naturally belongs to the other orders of intelligences, of whom the least, for any thing we know to the contrary, may be able to *wield these elements* at his pleasure, over which the most powerful combination of human strength and skill has so little command.

What then is naturally beyond the limits of human power is no object of human liberty; no one, for instance, is thought at liberty to walk across the ocean, or fly to the moon; and in innumerable cases within the natural limits, liberty may be wanting: how often is a man
unable,

unable, and therefore not free, to gratify his ambition, his appetites, or his interest, however willing he may be to do it, merely for want of occasions and opportunities.

Thus we see the narrow boundaries of the liberty of man. The cases are comparatively few in which he is able to act as he will; and this inability is one of the happiest circumstances of his condition; since in his present state of depravity, power generally serves him to no other end than to do mischief to himself, and to disturb the order of political and social life.

Indeed an unrestrained liberty would be incompatible with the very being of society, which cannot subsist without submission to some common authority by which the several claims of its members may be adjudged and settled.

However,

However, though a citizen, as such, must be subject to controul, his liberty, if he lives under a just and wise government, will not on the whole be diminished, but greatly extended and improved. If every man was left to act according to his own will and pleasure, there would arise a general contest for power, for wealth, and sensual gratifications; in the pursuit of these objects every one would be liable to be thwarted by the ability or address, the force or artifice of his neighbour; he could not even rear a hut or plant a garden without danger of obstruction in the attempt, or of deprivation in the possession: Whereas every member of a well-regulated state may act with a manly security within the boundaries of law, and is provided with the means of redress, should he at any time be injured by his fellow-citizens. When this is duly considered it will appear, that law is the source of liberty.

We

We shall now proceed more directly to the point in question, and endeavour to shew that neither our moral improvement nor our real happiness, would derive any advantage from a liberty of acting in all cases as we please. This, for the sake of distinctness, it may be proper to consider, first, as it relates to the Will; secondly, to the Passions; and thirdly, to the Understanding.

We all know that habits are formed by repeated acts, and that every faculty is invigorated by exercise; this is eminently true respecting the Will. Let a child be suffered for some time to do as he pleases, and we see him become heady and violent, indignant at the least opposition, and determined to pursue every object that strikes his fancy. Nor is it absolutely necessary that the object be naturally desirable; the Will can lend it attractions by the mere act of choosing it,

it, though before indifferent. And in things pleasing in themselves it is an infusion of self-will which often gives them an additional relish. Nay, what is still more strange, such is the malignant potency of this principle, that it can transform even misery itself into something more desirable than happiness when flowing from obedience and due subordination.

“ Better (says Satan) to reign in hell, than serve
“ in heaven.”

It must therefore be highly dangerous for a creature, naturally depraved, to be left without restraint; and should we consider political government in no other light than as a species of moral discipline, it would be found of no small importance.

The chief misery of man is, that he is set up for himself, affects to be his own lord, and would act in disdain of all authority whatsoever. To reclaim this
spirit

spirit and reduce it to a proper submission, is one happy tendency of a well-ordered policy. Under such a regimen a man finds himself perpetually controuled by salutary restrictions, and is obliged at every turn to yield up his own to the Will of his lawful superiors. Thus he acquires a habit of subjection to just authority, and the frowardness of his nature becomes partly corrected.

To man, as he is now disposed, an unrestrained liberty, besides the danger arising from it to his future happiness, would contribute much less to his present enjoyment than might at first be imagined. Persons who can do as they please are often at a loss to know what they would please to do; half their time is wasted in idle suspense, and the other in wandering from one design to another, without prosecuting any to good effect; and all that satisfaction which arises from
a useful

a useful plan of life early adopted and successfully pursued, is commonly lost by those who are not strictly confined to their object by the authority of their superiors, or the urgency of their circumstances. Hence it is often seen that younger brothers who are obliged to apply themselves to a profession, pass more comfortably through life than the heir of the family, who from being left to indulge his own humour, becomes capricious and restless, uneasy to himself, and to all around him.

There are few situations more undesirable than that of a man left to himself, and condemned to rove in his own uncertainties. As in taking a journey, when we have to cross a spacious plain, the eye after a while grows weary with wandering, the spirits become feeble and scattered, and we are glad to enter an inclosed country that presents us with
objects

objects on which both the eye and the mind may rest, and be refreshed ; so in the journey of life those parts which confine us to definite and allowable pursuits, are commonly more agreeable than others where we are left to roam at large.

If we compare a condition of moderate subjection with what is looked upon in the world as a state of independance, the former will appear preferable for these two reasons ; first, because it is less liable to anxious deliberation, and secondly, because it is less responsible for consequences. When a man's conduct is prescribed to him by his lawful superior, he has nothing to do but practically to attend to it, provided what is enjoined be neither contrary to any divine command, nor to any law of immutable morality ; whereas he who has others and himself at his disposal, is frequently subject to the perplexity of dubious counsels,

sels, and to the uneasiness arising from considering that he is answerable for every measure he adopts, and for every command he imposes. All this must be felt by every man of principle and reflection; and should his conscience happen to be delicate and scrupulous, must sometimes be felt by him in a manner very painful and distressing.

If we consider this, we shall not wonder to find many persons in the Romish church committing themselves to such as may direct them in ambiguous cases. When a tender conscience unites with a diffidence of temper, it naturally seeks repose this way. As the danger however is great of mistaking its guide, and as those men who are best qualified for so difficult an office will be the least forward to undertake it, the Protestants have properly dismissed, with other peculiarities of popery, this scheme of *direction*,

as more likely to be abused to the stupifying of conscience, than improved to the relief of groundless scrupulosity.

Secondly : that excess of liberty which tends so much to vitiate the will, no less tends to deprave the passions, and to augment their natural violence. The savage ferocity, and enormous lewdness, with other monstrous vices which marked the characters of many of the Roman emperors, as it cannot reasonably be ascribed to any extraordinary depravity of nature, must be resolved into the want of that salutary discipline and restraint, which served, in some measure, to keep other men within the bounds of virtue and decency. But there is no need of recurring to remote examples to shew that those who have been least under the government of others are generally least able to govern themselves; and that power, when it falls into such

hands, is commonly converted into an instrument of sensuality and injustice.

How little the liberty of gratifying the passions is calculated to render a man happy, may appear by attending only to their incroaching and insatiable nature, when once they are indulged, together with their aptness to interfere and clash with one another; which separate from every moral consideration, and what hereafter may take place under the righteous government of God, can hardly fail to breed much disquiet in the bosom where they are suffered to reign uncontrouled. To make the most of them even as to this world, is to subdue their natural wildness, and inure them to the guiding hand of reason and religion.

As civil polity extends not beyond the exterior order of society, it can only oppose the passions in such overt acts as
violate

violate this order. How great a range this leaves to their irregular motions, is obvious to the least reflection.

Though government can but very partially counteract the passions, it may powerfully excite and extend them, by furnishing means for new gratifications. In a state of rude nature, to draw his bow with a more certain aim, to array himself with the spoils of the beast he has overcome, or to track his way more surely through a wilderness, will content the ambition of a savage ; and if he can obtain provision for the day, and find a hovel to sleep in, his natural wants are tolerably satisfied. If we compare with this the condition of a man in the latter periods of society, when by the spread of luxury and refinement, every form of pleasure, and every flattering distinction are trying to fascinate his imagination, and to awaken every vanity that lies dor-

mant in his heart, it might appear to be questionable, whether the multiplied temptations of such a state are sufficiently compensated by the restraints it imposes.

This may suffice in regard to the *will* and the *passions*: Proceed we now, thirdly, to consider liberty as it relates to the *understanding*. The power displayed by some minds in pursuing or diversifying their enquiries at pleasure, is much to be admired. They will pass with vigour and facility from poetry to mathematics, from history to philosophy, from physics to metaphysics; this, however, while it gives variety and extent to their intellectual attainments, often renders them superficial and trifling, by preventing a regular and steady application to any one subject. Finding every difficulty give way before them, they are apt to be satisfied with the idea of what
they

they could have accomplished, and to assume the praise of genius without attaining the reality of knowledge.

Any eminent degree of intellectual liberty is scarcely to be found out of political society, and even within this pale, the individuals who possess it are comparatively few. When the wants of the body are to be supplied by daily labour, there can be little room for mental excursions; we should generally look in vain for flights of genius, or the severe investigations of reason, amongst hordes of savages, or in the mass of civil communities, who, from the unavoidable condition of humanity, must be chiefly engaged in corporeal employments. It is only amongst those classes of a cultivated people who can live comfortably upon their own fortune, or by the rewards held out to intellectual exertion, that we can probably expect to meet

with men of a free and enlarged understanding.

Those who are thus endowed might be of much service to the world, if, before they went in quest of new opinions, they carefully examined the old; and if they proposed their speculations with a due deference to the judgment and authority of others; without this modesty and precaution, they are in danger of becoming heretical in religion, and seditious in politics.

To restrain the excesses of a spirit of enquiry, without depriving society in some measure of its use, is, I suppose, beyond the reach of political wisdom. All human advantages must be taken as they exist, intangled with evils which it is impossible entirely to separate; if we can get rid of the more importunate, it is all we can reasonably expect. Wise
and

and moderate governments will therefore lean to the side of discussion, as generally tending to their own improvement, and the common good of mankind ; and will think it sufficient if they can prevent its more material inconveniencies.

Under despotic governments, we meet with few instances of a free and vigorous genius ; the mind lies abject and depressed with the body, without any ardour for rational investigation, which might draw down the vengeance of a power founded in ignorance and injustice. Civil and intellectual slavery generate one another ; and the same is true of liberty. If the government be free, it will liberalize and elevate the public understanding ; if despotic, it will sink and degrade it. On the other hand, if the public mind be dignified and expanded with knowledge, it will liberalize the government ; and if contracted and debased

debased by ignorance, it will invite oppression and tyranny.

The influence of this excursive power of the mind upon virtue and happiness, depends upon the use that is made of it. To wander in the regions of fancy, to frame imaginary tales and adventures which afford no light to human conduct, to build airy systems of philosophy and government, is commonly a childish, and at best an unprofitable amusement. The mind was made for truth, especially for moral and religious truth; and it is only by the pursuit and acquisition of this, that it can be perfected and felicitated.

This reflection naturally leads us to consider another species of liberty, of a nature far superior to the rest, and which constitutes the true dignity of man; namely, *moral* liberty.

By

By this I understand a power of acting with an habitual and prevalent regard to what is morally right.

Whether we place moral virtue in a conformity to the reason and fitness of things, or to the truth of things, or to their intrinsic worth and excellence, it will appear that the bulk of mankind are without the immediate power of thus conforming their actions, and consequently without moral liberty.

God as Creator is the absolute proprietor of the universe, and has a right to do what he will with his own; as possessed of infinite perfection, he alone is qualified to govern the world he has created: if we combine this right and fitness, we shall arrive at an adequate ground for an unlimited and voluntary submission to the divine authority and administration.

What

What can be more fit and reasonable, or more according to the truth of things, than to bow to his dominion whose property we are, and from whose power it is impossible to escape; whose perfection should lead us, even though we were naturally independent, to place ourselves in subjection to him as the only way of attaining the highest dignity and felicity of our nature? Wherein does true virtue consist but in treating things as they are, in valuing every thing according to its real worth, and consequently involving in it a supreme regard to that Being whose excellence is infinite?

Such a regard is undoubtedly required from us, and from the whole intelligent creation, upon every principle of reason and fitness, of truth and excellence, of duty and interest. Yet how little this is rendered by men in general, and how
little

little they are immediately capable of rendering it, will be evident upon a very slight examination.

No proud man has the present power thus to regard his Maker, any more than he has the power instantly to assume a spirit of humility and dependance. He who has been accustomed to indulge his own will and humour, is in no immediate capacity of freely sacrificing both to the will of another, and of submitting all his thoughts, words and actions, to divine controul. He who has been used to do homage to himself, and perhaps to receive it from others, has no proximate power voluntarily to abase himself before the holiness and majesty of God, in whose presence all creatures are as nothing, and sinful creatures worse than nothing. Every proud man is therefore morally a slave, without the
power

power of doing that which it is morally fit and right he should do.

The man of pleasure labours under the same moral impotency. He is at liberty to pursue the gratifications of sense, to chase the fading beauties of the world, and perhaps to seize various forms of excellence in art and nature; but he is not at liberty for spiritual enjoyments, to taste the refined pleasures of devotion, or to delight in the perfections of the divine nature. His wings are clipt, he can only flutter round the earth, and has no power of soaring aloft,

“ To the first good, first perfect, and first fair.”

Men devoted to wealth are, if possible, still less capable of perceiving the beauty, or of feeling the obligations of true religion and virtue; such is their degradation, that they are often looked down upon with contempt even by their fellow-

fellow-slaves as the low drudges of the world, incapable of every noble and generous sentiment.

We may therefore conclude, that the bulk of mankind are without the present power of preferring actually and in practice, the excellence and felicity of virtue, to the riches, the pleasures, and the pride of the world; consequently that they are destitute of true moral liberty, and are slaves in the most deplorable sense.

To relieve us from this bondage, civil institutions can no further avail than as they serve to promote real religion, which is the only thing capable of recovering to our nature its true freedom.

All beings, in their original state, were perfect in their kind, without the least defect, moral or physical. After the formation of man, God is represented

as looking down upon his works with complacency, and pronouncing them *very good*, as answerable to the great idea that existed in his own eternal mind. Man more eminently bore the image of his Maker, and approached him with filial delight and confidence. Thus was he constituted in honour and happiness, but he *continued not*; he soon incurred the divine displeasure by his disobedience, and exposed himself and his posterity to known and unknown evils.

In this state of ruin, God again looked down upon man, and looked down in mercy as well as judgment. In the sentence pronounced upon the tempter was conveyed an intimation of favour to the human race, through the *seed of the woman*; by which *seed* we are authorized, from subsequent revelations, to understand *Jesus* the Son of God.

What

What would have been the future destiny of man, or whether he would have been brought into existence at all, had not a gracious provision been made for his recovery upon the foresight of his lapse, as it hath not, that I know of, been expressly revealed, it would seem to me presumption in any man to determine. God himself only can tell what it would have become him to do in a conjuncture which never existed, and which was never intended to exist.

What concerns us to be acquainted with, is our present actual situation; that we no longer stand before God upon the ground of creation but of redemption; that all the help and hope of which we participate, is derived to us only through a Mediator; and that as we improve or neglect our advantages, we shall be dealt with in the final judgment.

If, therefore, every good which now is derived to man is in virtue of the mediation of Christ, then moral liberty, which is a principal one, must flow to us in this channel. In vain would you expect to find it in the *Stoa*, or the *Lyceum*, in the groves of the *Academy*, or the gardens of *Epicurus*; or in any of our modern and improved schools of deism and legislative philosophy. The gospel contains the only scheme, and is the only proclamation of true liberty that the world was ever acquainted with; a liberty from guilt and tyrannic passions; a liberty to obey the laws of piety, and the dictates of uncorrupted nature; a liberty, beyond all others, to be welcomed with cordial gratulations. When the Greeks were restored to the enjoyment of their ancient laws and immunities by the Roman general Flaminius, their acclamations, as Plutarch tells us, were heard out at sea, and the birds, which
were

were passing at the time, stunned with the noise, dropped down in the midst of the assembly, who unanimously hailed Flaminius as the saviour and defender of Greece. Yet how trivial was this proclamation of the proconsul compared with that made by the Saviour of the world, when in the synagogue of Nazareth he stood up and read from the prophet Isaias, *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord**. Were these tidings universally published, and duly credited, the whole world could not fail to unite in acclamations of gladness.

* Luke, chap. iv. ver. 16—21.

Of our state of moral bondage the wiser heathens appear to have had some obscure notion derived from tradition, which they dressed up after their own fancy. Plato represents the soul as originally winged, and flying through the heavens in the train of Jupiter and the gods; and at certain seasons he supposes her to have been admitted into some super-celestial region, where she contemplated truth, virtue and justice in their source. Thus, he says, she continued inexpressibly happy, till neglecting to accompany the chariot of Jupiter, being seduced by her passion for Nectar and Ambrosia, she lost her wings, fell to the earth, and was sunk into the body *. Could Plato have told us how she might recover her wings, and again mount aloft to the banquet of the gods,

* See Plato's Phædrus.

he would have told us what we are principally concerned to know, but what is only taught in the school of Christ. Even Porphyry, who was so determined a foe to the Christian religion, and so perfectly acquainted with the most refined and mysterious doctrines of paganism, says, " he had not learned that
 " any universal method of liberating the
 " soul had yet been discovered by the
 " wisdom of philosophy *."

The pre-eminence of moral to every other species of liberty, needs little illustration. What could it avail a man to climb the Alps, or the Andes, to visit the pyramids of Egypt, or the great wall of China; or more wisely perhaps sit at home, under the protection of equal laws, and quietly enjoy his portion of

* See Aug. de Civit Dei. Lib. x. cap. 32.

the good things of this life ? What would it avail him to range through all the arts and sciences, and traverse the intellectual world, if he is held with invisible chains, fettered with guilt, and tyrannized by his passions.

As nothing so much dignifies our nature as moral liberty, we might chiefly expect to find it among those, who, by their rank in society, are taught to aspire after whatever is laudable and excellent. Yet such an expectation is not justified by fact ; neither the abodes of splendor, nor of greatness, neither courts nor serenas, have hitherto been the favourite haunts of that freedom which implies an exemption from the power of sensuality, avarice, and ambition.

It is, however, the glory of christianity, that it can liberate the mind in all exterior circumstances, in the highest elevation

elevation of power and fortune, and in the lowest condition of bondage. Paul and Silas, when thrust into the inner prison at Philippi, and fastened in the stocks, by singing praises to God at midnight, shewed the freedom of their spirits *. And how superior to king Agrippa does the former appear, when pleading his cause before him, he uttered this fervent wish ; *I would to God, that not only thou, but all who bear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds* †. And at this day, among those highly injured Africans, whose civil emancipation has of late been so nobly attempted, some we have reason to believe are the denizens of heaven, and enjoy an enfranchisement even under the scourge of oppression, to which it may be feared both their oppressors and advocates are commonly strangers.

* Acts, chap. xvi.

† Ibid. chap. xxvi.

So far as any man, whether he is a West-India planter, or in any other rank or station, acts the part of a tyrant, he forfeits all just claim to the dignity of moral freedom. Nor has a patriot much to boast of his superior character, if, while he promises liberty to others, he himself is a slave of depravity; such a patriot preaching political freedom in chains of moral bondage, is just the reverse of Paul the apostle.

In the kingdom of God, a spirit of liberty runs through every rank of subordination; though he should be a slave in the order of this world, a subject of this kingdom is free in the noblest sense, by holding, as it were, *in capite*, under the great Lord of the universe.

Another principal object of government is *property*; while this is left unprotected, and open to depredations,
society

society can never rise above a savage state ; no flocks and herds will be reared, no lands will be cultivated, no regular provision will be made for the supply of human wants. It is only a secure enjoyment of what is acquired, that will stimulate industry and quicken invention, that will accumulate stock, and produce those various arts that are necessary to the existence and order of civil life.

In the progress of society as individuals grow wealthy, which will be the case where property is secure, and where industry and ingenuity have free scope ; to the arts of necessity, others for the sake of convenience and ornament will be added, and perhaps should be allowed within certain limits.

It would be desirable, indeed, that every member of a community should be engaged in some way of real utility ;
but

but this may not always be practicable. Suppose a thousand persons in the wilds of America united in one body politic, and suppose one half of them sufficient, by moderate labour, to provide for the physical wants of the whole ; of the other half but few could properly be employed as lawyers, physicians, philosophers, or divines ; and unless some new occupations be struck out to preserve the rest from idleness, distressing must be the condition, and, probably, short the duration, of this little state.

So far then as supernumerary arts by affording employment, prevent one part of society from becoming a burden, or a nuisance to the other, they are warranted by the severest policy ; but when, from a principle of luxurious indulgence, they become multiplied beyond this necessity, they are sure to prove pernicious to morals and religion. And this we
may

may pronounce will infallibly be the consequence of increasing wealth in a state, as in the present condition of human nature this powerful engine will not fail to be applied to the promotion of every device that can minister to the passions.

It may be said, however, on the other side, that though wealth will certainly generate many low and vicious arts, yet that it serves to excite others, which, by refining the taste, may help to improve the moral character.

That the fine arts cannot flourish without the fostering hand of riches is allowed. Men, till they are provided with the necessaries and the principal conveniencies of life, are not disposed to look out for its elegancies; and what meets with little encouragement can make but little progress. No great artist was ever produced among a horde of savages,

savages, nor during that first period of a community when it was struggling for establishment.

It is true also, that by cultivating the arts in question, a just and quick perception of natural fitness and proportion, of harmony and beauty, is formed; and were this so closely connected with the moral sense as some have supposed, every choice repository of art would doubtless be a school of virtue.

That natural excellence bears some analogy to moral, and will suggest it to a mind duly disposed, may be admitted, without allowing them to be objects of the same individual taste. Men the most exquisitely alive to artificial and natural beauty, are often insensible to the charms of true virtue, which, if rightly discerned, would, according to a sentiment of Plato,
kindle

kindle in the soul an incredible delight and admiration.

It is not however to be denied, that a good man may be a great artist, and that his art may contribute to the promotion of virtue. He may teach the canvas or the marble to inspire just and noble sentiments, and by transmitting durable monuments to the honour of such who have deserved well of mankind, may excite posterity to a laudable emulation. All this is possible, and perhaps not without example.

If the fine arts can only flourish in the advanced stages of society, the same must hold equally true of the sciences, which certainly stand no less in need of encouragement. We could no more reasonably expect to meet with an able mathematician or astronomer among the

Hurons or the Iroquois, than with an exquisite painter or statuary.

I would not here be understood as if I meant to confound the fine arts, either in point of dignity or use, with mathematical science or a genuine experimental philosophy, which, excepting some of their more abstruse and curious parts, deserve, undoubtedly, to be considered in a much superior light; for while the former can only exhibit beautiful and striking pictures of nature, and lend embellishment to society, the latter serves to unfold the wisdom and goodness of the Creator in the structure and destination of his works, an end far more excellent; besides supplying many solid advantages to human life.

If our minds were sound, and rightly constituted, all things would contribute
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to their improvement; every excellence of art, as well as every discovery of nature, would lead to the great source of truth and perfection; shadows would teach realities, and creation become a mirror of the Deity. At present our condition, as not unaptly conceived by an ancient philosopher *, resembles that of men chained down from their infancy in a cavern, with their backs towards the light, and thus left to contemplate the figures projected upon the sides of their prison, mistaking them for the real objects.

Man in this shadowy state is fond of shadows, and turns his back upon the world of realities. He will dwell with rapture on the power of Raphael's pencil displaying the histories and characters of

* See Plat. rep. lib. 7. initio.

scripture, without any regard to the real nature of the things represented; and will speculate with wonder on the earth and visible heavens which shall soon pass away and be dissolved, while he remains insensible to that world which knows neither time nor change, and to which he stands so nearly related.

Whatever does not tend to strengthen in man a regard to futurity, or in respect to the present life, is not essentially necessary to the supply of his primary wants, must be to him of no great importance. Upon this principle I fear we shall be obliged to lower our estimation of a great deal that is called learning, and of many ingenious arts, as being neither needful to protect the body from the injuries of the elements, nor to provide it with sufficient sustenance; and also as it may be fairly questioned, whether on the whole they are really conducive

ducive to the moral improvement of mankind.

To justify this query it may be sufficient to observe, that at the very period when the Greeks were most highly distinguished on account of their learning and taste, the practice of lending out their wives, of exposing their children, of indulging unnatural lusts, was common amongst them; which shews that the corruption of their morals kept at least equal pace with their literary and polite accomplishments; and that the love of virtue, and a true taste for the *belles lettres* or the fine arts, are not, as some have fondly imagined, branches springing from the same root.

If the worst effect of wealth was to raise up a few ingenious men to embellish and dignify society, it might well be tolerated under the most perfect system

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of government ; but the evil is, that luxury, its inseparable attendant, is not satisfied without a numerous train of less refined ministers ; and this at the expence of the necessary business of life, which is left to stagnate for want of those hands that are retained by vanity and vice.

Indeed by sumptuary and other regulations, something may be done to obstruct the course of luxury ; yet without a prevalence of religious principle beyond what has hitherto been known, nothing will prove an effectual bar against it but poverty. The Romans, while they were poor, lived according to the simplicity of nature ; by skilfully associating poverty with honour, a few acres were enough for the proudest citizen ; but after the influx of Asiatic wealth the love of pleasure got the better of their pride, and they soon became infamously abandoned and profligate. The same has happened
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to every other people in similar circumstances. Should a nation ever be formed upon the principles of true Christianity, another scene would be exhibited; such a nation, if poor, would not eagerly seek to be rich; and if possessed of riches would not employ them in procuring private indulgencies, or displaying a vain public magnificence, but in relieving the wants and promoting the improvement of mankind in general, reserving only a modest and adequate fund for the maintenance of the common safety.

While the world continues to act upon its old principles, riches can only add wings to corruption; and those who make them the standard of public prosperity have no just idea either of virtue or of policy.

Except in those climates where nature furnishes almost of herself all that is

needful for the sustenance of life, no human wisdom, as we have seen, can raise the bulk of a people above the necessity of moderate labour; and the fewer they are who stand exempted from this necessity, the more is the virtue and happiness of the community likely to be promoted. It is not meant that all should be engaged in manual occupations, or in such as are of direct utility, which in a great nation may seem impracticable; it is enough if no man be left unemployed in some way or other, corporeal or intellectual, innocently at least as to himself, and without detriment to his fellow-citizens.

Employment is one of the greatest political objects: Where this is duly provided for, where every citizen is engaged in some useful or honest occupation, in short, where idleness is excluded, and the arts of luxury are unknown, all
must

must tend to individual and general happiness.

Among the other disadvantages of uncivilized life is the want of regular occupation. A savage will lie for days together stretched in his cabin or in the shade, till roused by hunger he again sallies forth into the wilderness in quest of prey, thus sharing his time between violent motion and torpid rest.

Yet some modern writers have exerted all the force of their genius and eloquence, in attempting to elevate the savage above the civilized state of man. Instead of Greeks and Romans we hear of Caffres and Eskimaux, of Cherokees and Chickasaws; to these or to other hordes who are supposed still more entirely under the tuition of uncorrupted nature, we are directed for examples of pure virtue and unmingled felicity.

Whether the indigence and rudeness of savage life is preferable to a wealthy and luxurious state of society, I am not anxious to determine ; but it may safely be affirmed, that there is a middle period which is preferable to either, after a people have emerged from barbarism, and before they have arrived at false refinement.

It is easy for the fancy to invest with borrowed qualities persons and things with which we are little acquainted. A voyager touching upon a strange coast, and beholding a company of the natives seated at their ease under the foliage of some spreading oak or plantain, while others are seen diverting themselves on the lawn with the dance and the song, will be ready to imagine himself transported to a paradisaical region where all is innocence and delight ; and should he happen to be received to a hospitable repast,

repast, instead of being devoured himself, he will be disposed to requite them with the praise of every virtue that can adorn humanity. To appearances much less flattering than these, we are probably indebted for some late panegyrics upon savage life and manners. We all know how common it is for men, especially for travellers, out of mere vanity to embellish their narratives; and we may know too that there are not wanting some, who will both embellish and invent, from a malignant design of exalting nature at the expence of christianity.

Man is radically the same in all situations. The love of pleasure, the love of consequence, and the love of wealth, where wealth is to be obtained, are naturally his ruling principles, only diversified in their operation according to the various physical and moral circumstances in which he is placed.

For what virtue a savage is distinguished I have yet to learn, unless we will dignify with the name a sullen kind of fortitude by which he will brave pain and death, and almost justify the rant of the Stoics, that man by discipline may become proof against all external evils: Though this savage stoutness has indeed been ostentatiously opposed to the sufferings of Christian martyrs, by men who will see no difference between a natural hardness supported by the obstinacy of pride, and the power of divine faith and resignation.

Nor am I able to imagine wherein the superior happiness of a savage can consist, unless we choose to place it in his pride of independance. He has no master to serve nor patron to please; he can lie down and rise up, go out and come in as a lord of the creation, above ceremony and above controul. On the other hand, however, it must be remembered, that
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if he pays no regard to others they pay as little to him, and that in all the dignity of his condition he is in constant danger of being left to starve in his hut, or to perish in the desert.

Man must in some degree be humanized before he is capable of science, virtue, or happiness, and he can only be humanized in society; from which should he early be separated, and suffered to run wild in the woods, he would probably soon lose even the rudiments of speech, his ideas would scarce be extended beyond the objects that surrounded him, his powers of reflection would lie dormant, and the human would almost be levelled with brute natures. And in proportion as the condition of a savage approaches to this, the greater must be his intellectual and moral inability.

Man

Man is very much the product of his education; nature only furnishes capacity, 'tis education which calls it forth and directs it; and no man was ever qualified to educate himself. A mind of the greatest powers must be indebted to foreign assistance in its progress from ignorance to knowledge, from rudeness to refinement. Reason continues long in her infancy, during which she has need of leading-strings; and after she has gained vigour to walk alone, must be supplied with principles on which to proceed, or she will be in constant danger of wandering into error. These principles in natural enquiries she must borrow from the school of experience, and in those which concern religion, from divine revelation.

It is the want of such principles, together with the sluggishness of his faculties, that retains a savage in his state of rudeness.

rudeness. He needs not only axioms on which to ground his reasonings, but the influence of other minds to excite his own to a proper exertion, and this he cannot find out of cultivated society.

I have sometimes in crossing an extensive down met with a shepherd tending his flock in some retired valley, far removed from the busy walks of men, who has appeared in his perceptions not much superior to the animals under his care, nor much better able to express them. And among the peasantry in general, if we examine those who have never been taught the common rudiments of learning, what a scantiness of ideas, what grossness of apprehension, and of consequence, what unaptness for moral and religious instruction! Whereas in towns enlivened by trade and manufactures, where the inhabitants frequently converse and transact business with one another

another and with strangers, even the poor and uneducated commonly manifest a share of ability and intelligence, which is rarely to be found in the huts of ploughmen and shepherds; while such as are a little raised above a state of penury, and whose understandings have received a degree of culture, may perhaps of all the various classes of mankind, justly be considered as the most prepared auditors of true wisdom.

When a man's exterior condition falls below a humble mediocrity, when his mind is depressed with poverty and toil, or suspended with anxiety on account of a precarious subsistence, the counsels of reason and religion will commonly be delivered to him in vain. When Moses spake to his brethren in Egypt, they hearkened not to him, *for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage* *. Nor is a full

* Exod. vi. 9.

estate more propitious to wisdom. In one of the prophets, God is thus introduced as reproaching his people Israel, *I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not bear* *. These, with innumerable instances that come under daily observation, shew the propriety of Agur's prayer, *Give me neither poverty nor riches.*

The extremes of learned refinement and unenlightened barbarism are no less unfavourable to the acquisition of true wisdom. The polite scholar, and the philosophic sage, are often found as unqualified subjects of religious teaching as the untutored savage; arising indeed not from literature or philosophy in themselves, but from that presumption with which they are so apt to swell the mind, and indispose it to that doctrine whose first and last instruction is humility.

* Jer. xxii. 21.

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Though mediocrity is not the standard of true virtue, as Aristotle supposed, it seems best however in those endowments and advantages which relate merely to our present state. Man is not made for extremes; his body seldom arrives at its due expansion and vigour except in temperate climates; and moderate talents and circumstances are generally best suited to his mind.

Hence the care of government should be to place and secure a nation in that state, in which the fewest individuals possible are in extreme wealth or indigence; and in which the arts and sciences are no further encouraged than as they are calculated to increase or preserve useful knowledge, to furnish employment, and minister to the real wants or innocent satisfactions of life.

What

What then shall we think of that policy which by an undue extension of commerce breaks this system of mediocrity, by letting in upon a country an overflow of riches, which is sure to be followed by luxury with all its mischievous consequences? Yet to impose such restrictions as may prevent these evils, without giving a check to honest industry, and perhaps in some cases endangering the common safety, may be a matter of much difficulty.

It is curious to observe the different ideas entertained upon the same subjects in different ages. Among the ancient Greeks trade was branded with infamy; both Plato and Aristotle were for excluding those who engaged in it from the rank of citizens; and it is only of late times that in our own country it has risen into estimation. Even agriculture, which is now justly accounted among the most liberal

liberal as well as necessary arts, was by the Lacedemonians and other military states thought only fit to be exercised by slaves. These high-minded gentlemen deemed nothing worthy their attention but war and conquest, which now, at least in theory, are growing out of fashion, and yielding to the general predilection for manufactures and commerce.

“ Rem, rem, quocunque modo, rem.”

To assert in general that commerce is not preferable to war would not be just, because war is an evil in its own nature, and commerce only by its excess; yet this excess may be such as to render it more destructive than war itself. *Sævior armis luxuria incubuit*, is the remark of a Roman satyrift after Italy was deluged with the riches of the East.

It cannot be too much inculcated, that nothing is of real value which does not
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tend to promote the virtue and harmless enjoyments of mankind, however it may add to the dissipating pleasures, the opulence, or the splendour of life.

Here then we must come to religion, to which we are led by every just enquiry into the nature and state of man, as the only source of true virtue and innocent pleasure.

I know indeed that some late pretended philosophers have endeavoured to establish an opinion, that a wise legislation is all that is necessary to make the world virtuous and happy ; and consequently that all the evils which mankind have hitherto laboured under, are to be ascribed to a want of political science. Now, allowing that whatever evils have arisen from bad government are capable of correction by the contrary, still it may be true, that such as made their way into the
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world previous to all civil government whatsoever, may require remedies which no human policy or power can provide or apply.

Let us however for a moment listen to these political sages. Virtue, according to their great doctor Helvetius, consists in the knowledge (why not the practice ?) of those duties we owe one to another, and therefore supposes the formation of societies. "A man," says he, "born in a desert isle and abandoned to himself, would remain without vice and without virtue." "What then," he proceeds, "must we understand by the words virtuous and vicious, but actions either useful or injurious to the public * ?" The same
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* Vertu—consiste dans la connoissance de ce que les hommes se doivent les uns aux autres—elle suppose par consequent la formation des sociétés.

is held by others of this philosophic school: I shall only subjoin a passage from Raynall: "Since society," he observes, "should be useful to all its members, they ought every one in return to be useful to society: So, to be virtuous is to be useful, and to be vicious is to be useless or hurtful: Behold, the sum of morality *." Hence it is but supposing that virtue and vice relate only to society, and that the state of society depends only upon the laws, and the conclusion fol-

Né dans une île déserte, abandonné à moi-même, J'y vis sans vice & sans vertu—Que faut-il donc entendre par ces mots *vertueux* & *vicieux*? les actions utiles ou nuisibles à la société. Helvétius de l'homme, Sect. 2. Ch. 16. (Note 9.)

* Puisque la société doit être utile à chacun de ses membres, il est de la justice que chacun de ses membres soit utile à la société. Ainsi être vertueux, c'est être utile; être vicieux, c'est être inutile ou nuisible. Voilà la morale. Rayn. Hist. Phil. Liv. 19. p. 298.

lows, *That nothing is wanting to reform
the world but a wise legislation.*

What such writers mean by being useful to society we may collect from their ideas of human happiness. "I maintain," says Helvetius, "that man from his very frame and constitution is only capable of the pleasures of sense *." Again, "Physical sensibility constitutes man himself, and is the foundation of all that pertains to his being †." Hence he infers that neither our desires or knowledge can extend beyond the senses. Accordingly he considers those as the only

* Je dis que l'homme, n'étant, par sa nature, sensible qu'aux plaisirs des sens, ces plaisirs, par conséquent, sont l'unique objet de ses desirs.—*Helv. de l'esprit. Disc. 3. Ch. 10.*

† La sensibilité physique est l'homme lui-même & le principe de tout ce qu'il est. Aussi ses connoissances n'atteignent-elles jamais au-delà de ses sens. *Id. de l'homme Recap. Ch. 2.*

taints who add to the public stock of sensitive enjoyments by inventing some new pleasure *.

These are notions at which Epicurus might have blushed, who by placing the supreme good of man in indolence of body and tranquillity of mind, affected at least a kind of philosophic superiority to mere animal gratifications.

The doctrine of this school, that truth alone is sufficient for regenerating mankind, is certainly new, and worthy of its authors. Philosophers have formerly been used to lament the feebleness of reason, which when single and unsupported, they found was commonly overborne and trampled under foot amidst the scuffle and tumult of the world. They have lamented that the judgments of men

* See de l'homme, Sect. 1. Ch. 13.

were so much governed by their passions, especially by their interest, of which a witty poet who wanted the illumination of modern philosophy thus describes the wonderful power :

“ What makes all doctrines plain and clear ?
About two hundred pounds a year.
And that which was proved true before,
Prove false again ? Two hundred more.”

Nor have they less lamented the inefficacy of truth after full conviction to produce correspondent practice. Shakspeare, who is supposed to have been tolerably skilled in human nature, and may be reckoned as good a philosopher as many who assume that title, remarks, that “ If to do were as easy as to tell what is fit to be done, chapels had been churches, and poor men’s cottages princes palaces.” “ I could sooner,” says he, “ tell twenty what is fit to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow my own instructions.” Poor Shakspeare ! he too

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it seems was ignorant of the irrefragible efficacy, or as some choose to speak, the omnipotency of truth.

Should we ask these political prophets, what wonder-working truths they have in commission to reveal? they will tell us, That all men are equal in respect of their rights: That the objects of these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance of oppression: Finally, that the people are the only just source of civil authority. And are these truths, admitting them to be such, of sufficient potency to regenerate man, and restore him to the true dignity of his nature; which neither instruct him in his origin or end, nor in his situation under the moral government of God, that "most ancient city and polity," as the philosophic emperor speaks *, to whose laws all ra-

* Marc. Antonin. Lib. 2. Sect. 16.

tional creatures are subject? Our sage legislators should consider this, before they presume to substitute in the place of religion their dubious and slippery politics. Before they take upon them to legislate for immortal man, they should learn to extend their views beyond the present stage of existence, and the tragedies that are acting upon it, to a life to come, and the great system of the universe. "The finest gentleman," says a noble author, (and we may affirm the same of the profoundest politician) "must after all be considered but as an idiot, who talking much of the knowledge of the world and mankind, has never so much as thought of the study or knowledge of himself, or of the nature and government of that great Public and World whence he holds his *being*."

Quid sumus, & quidnam victuri gignimur *."

* Shaft. Characteristics. Vol. 3. p. 109.

If man besides a present has a future interest which is infinitely more important, and if religion points out the only way of securing this interest, then that policy which supplants religion, cuts off the best hopes of our nature. But the policy which tells us that to be good citizens is the sum of all our duty to God and man, evidently sets aside the first and great law of religion which enjoins a supreme regard to the Author of our existence, without which it teaches us, that whatever be our character in society we can never be admitted to a participation of the divine favour in a happy immortality. Should therefore any government inspire a contempt or neglect of piety, it might justly be considered as an enemy to the true interest of man, though it should elevate a people to the highest pitch of greatness, or place them in any other situation which might better conduce to their temporal enjoyment:

ment. All this would prove but a miserable compensation for the danger arising from the example of those above them, which would operate almost irresistibly to the increase of that awful disregard which is natural to us all, of a state and interest which will commence beyond the grave, and extend to eternity.

Not can the force of this consideration be invalidated but by the most infallible proof that such a state and interest are groundless fictions, since the bare possibility of their reality must infinitely outweigh all the good and evil that terminate with this life.

It is then the malignant aspect of our political policy upon the spiritual, which we naturally expect it to be very favourable to the temporal welfare of a people, as we have here supposed; but have never come to apprehend, that

while it endeavours to intercept the view of another world, its counsels in this will be smitten with infatuation, and that the people who are deluded by it will find themselves deprived at once of the blessings of the present, and the hopes of a better life.

It has indeed been urged by a famous writer, famous for his reasoning and subtilty *, that even a society of atheists is as likely as any other to become great and prosperous. Now supposing this to be true; let us again reflect what a hideous spectacle would be exhibited by a number of immortal beings, immortal in spite of all their sottisisms or their sophistry, occupying or amusing themselves during the short course of this life, without any concern for what may take place beyond it. The more such a society should be

* Mr. Bayle.

found at its ease, the more deeply it was intrenched in political security, and abounding in present gratifications, the more awful would be its situation ; war, pestilence, or famine, or if there be any still sorer calamities that might serve to rouse it to a sense of futurity, would in the eye of reason be far less dreadful, than to be left to enjoy the present world without fear or disturbance, chanting the Syren song, *Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die !*

The reasoning of the above author to set aside the importance of religion to the welfare of a state, appears to be this, That the fortunes of men depend upon their conduct, and their conduct upon their habits, their passions, and their temperament. But ought he not to have better considered, that religious opinion frequently operates to the formation of the most powerful habits, as well as to
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weaken and dissolve them; that the passions are influenced by apprehensions of future, as well as of present, good and evil; and that even the temperament is in some degree subject to the power of religion? Though articles of faith produce not always their full effect, they always produce some effect, they give some impulse to the mind, and when rightly formed and seconded by action, always generate right affections and habits, and tend to produce a happy temperament of the whole man; consequently must contribute both to individual and general happiness.

It is usual with the enemies of true religion to confound it with some abject superstition, which degrades the understanding, sinks the courage, and begets a mean and pusillanimous character; and this confusion is the more easy, as religion instructs its disciples to regard
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with comparative indifference those things which are the great objects of pursuit to others; though when the cause of truth and the real interests of humanity are in question, so far from standing aloof as indifferent spectators, they will be disposed to step forward with alacrity in their just defence, and in support of every measure that may further promote them.

However, though it is highly injurious to represent religion as unfriendly to the real welfare of society, by converting its members into superstitious monks or idle visionaries, I will not assert with a very eminent writer *, that it naturally tends to political aggrandizement. He thinks that a perfectly virtuous nation, (which can only be formed upon the principles of piety,) would in a course of ages, according to the ordinary progress of things, obtain the empire of the world.

* Bishop Butler. See his Analogy, Part I. Ch. 3.

This perhaps may be as great an excess on one hand, as it is on the other to affirm, that such a nation would infallibly fall a prey to external violence or intrigue. As I see nothing in the principles of religion, rightly understood, which forbid a prudent provision for the purpose of just defence, so I can discern nothing in those principles tending to an augmentation of power beyond what such defence may require. A nation such as here supposed, being neither actuated by avarice or ambition, would naturally be satisfied with a modest supply of its wants, and a reasonable prospect of safety, without seeking to drain the wealth or acquire the dominion of any other. What would be the effect of its instruction and example, or what particular designs of providence it might accomplish in a course of ages upon the world in general, it is beyond our reach to determine.

This

This is certain, that the effect of Christianity upon every individual who humbly submits to its discipline, is the improvement of his own character in every respect. It teaches him to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; to love good men of every name and to pity the bad, to fear God and honour the king: It teaches him in whatever state he is therewith to be content; and so far from training him up to an indolent and visionary life, it instructs him to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; to labour with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him who needeth; laying it down as a fundamental principle of equity, that *if any man will not work, neither should he eat*. In short, *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise:*

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These things it urges upon his attention, and enables him to carry into practice.

That such a religion is unfavourable to the real happiness of society, that honesty and industry, virtue and honour, tend to poverty and pusillanimity, is a discovery that was reserved for the present enlightened period. Such a religion, indeed, inspires not a nation with the ambition of conquest, nor by an undue extension of its commerce, lets in upon it a deluge of wealth and luxury. Forgive it this wrong: and provided it secures every substantial political advantage, and opens to the individual the prospect of a more exalted society hereafter, let it not be censured because it gives no encouragement to domineering pride, vain splendour, or luxurious indulgence.

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If to this statement of the public influence of religion, any one should object the wars and commotions to which it appears to have given occasion, it may be answered, that this is often little more than appearance; and that the chief cause of these disturbances, as of most others, is worldly ambition and interest; or such a prompt disposition to quarrel, that were religion entirely out of question, would not fail to find out some other ground or pretext. It may further be replied, that when religion is more immediately the principle of contention, as may sometimes unhappily be the case, it is not religion in its purity, such as it was published by Christ and his apostles, but either some corruption that has mingled with it, or some virulent superstition that can only be ranked under the title of religion, when understood in a very general sense. The natural tendency

clency of uncorrupted christianity is to prevent war, to mitigate its ferocity, and to hasten its termination, by inspiring the benevolent, and controuling the malignant passions, and thus to unite men in the bonds of mutual amity.

It must not however be dissembled, that christianity, from the very purity and excellence of its nature, though it cannot be the principle, is frequently the occasion of animosity and discord. Christ says, that *he came not to send peace but a sword*; that *five should be in one house divided, three against two, and two against three*. For though angels at his nativity proclaimed peace on earth, and goodwill to men; though the gospel, which is termed *the gospel of peace*, is a scheme formed by infinite wisdom to bring about an universal pacification, peace with God, peace of conscience, peace in every social and civil relation; and though it infal-

libly produces these effects in all by whom it is duly received; yet among those who unhappily reject its overtures, whose pride is offended by the humiliating terms it proposes, and their sensual passions by the purity of its precepts, it often occasions keen resentment towards such as, by complying with its requisitions, reflect the guilt and danger of its enemies.

In this war, arising from the opposition of darkness to light, and of vice to virtue, it is the glory of christianity that it admits of no compromise; though it can pity him who wanders from truth, it affords no countenance to his errors; though it can pardon the criminal, it gives no allowance to his vices or his crimes. And what harm can be derived to society from a system calculated to deliver it from its depravities, both in principle and practice, by holding out
 5 the

the light of truth, and supplying those motives and assistances, without which, for want of personal virtue, no society can be formed either truly great, or of long duration. *Righteousness*, says a wise prince, *exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach*, and in the end will prove the ruin of any people. And this is true, according to the natural course of things, under the stated government of God, without taking into consideration the extraordinary dispensations of his providence.

If such, then, be the importance of religion, it should certainly be a chief concern of government to do nothing to its prejudice; for as the real good of man is the design of every rational institution, it would be preposterous to consult his temporal at the expence of his future interest. Nor is this negative precaution all that is necessary; as every

man is under obligation, by just and lawful means, to do all the good he can, it must be binding upon rulers to promote the cause of true religion in the world, in every practicable way that is allowable in itself, and consistent with the duties of their proper station.

Indeed, to determine what those ways are, and how far they are consistent with the public character of the magistrate, may be often a matter of much difficulty. Many have been, and many now are of opinion, that civil government has nothing to do with religion, that the end of its institution is for temporal purposes only, and that every man, without the least political compulsion or influence, should be left to pursue his spiritual edification, either by his own separate endeavours, or by voluntarily associating with others in any way that shall not violate the order and peace of society.

Without

Without entering into this subject, I would observe, that whenever the magistrate *does* interpose in the affairs of religion, his first care should be *to do no harm*, either by patronizing a false religion, or endeavouring to promote the true one by methods that are not congenial with its spirit; and thus perhaps endangering the temporal as well as spiritual welfare of the people. How many wars have been kindled in the world by religious persecution! And where it has not caused an open revolt, it has been sure to diffuse an angry ferment, and to engender hypocrisy, which, by gradually undermining principle, may prove more destructive than the bitterest hostile contention. And so far as religion is made a tool for political purposes, the same, or other consequences no less mischievous, may be expected to follow.

The great end of true religion is the salvation of souls ; and all that men ought to do in this respect, is to attend to those means which this religion prescribes or warrants. What those means are, may be learned from the scriptures, especially of the New Testament. Among them we may reckon the education of youth, the restraining of immorality, the discountenance of idleness, the encouragement of honest industry ; and, above all, a provision of faithful men duly qualified for the ministry of the gospel, in which is eminently displayed *the power of God unto salvation*. That nation where this provision is best made, and the subordinate means best attended to, is undoubtedly in the happiest circumstances ; and whether this is done by the people, or the government, or by the cooperation of both, is a circumstance of no material consideration.

If

If we look into the history of former ages, and observe how much religion has been obstructed and debased by tyrannic and corrupt governments, we may see reason to congratulate a people when they are left to provide for themselves in their spiritual concerns at the single impulse of their own consciences. Yet, considering the general disregard of mankind to every thing that relates to another world, we may see still greater cause of congratulation, when by the special favour of heaven, a people is blessed with truly enlightened and christian rulers, who are no less studious to promote their religious advantages, than to establish and perpetuate their just rights, and secure their temporal welfare.

SECTION IV.

REASONS FOR CONTENTMENT UNDER ANY
MODERATE GOVERNMENT.

AS without some degree of conformity between our interior dispositions and our external circumstances, there can be no contentment, it is evident we can only attain this blessing by bringing our circumstances to our mind, or the contrary; and as the former method is generally impracticable, we must either succeed by the latter, or probably be left to struggle through life with bitterness and sorrow.

Man finding himself ill at ease, and not understanding the true ground of his complaint, is ready to resolve it, as we have before observed, into some unhappi-

happinefs or defect in his exterior condition; hence it ufually happens, that to remove one after another the grievances that prefs hardeft upon him, and to multiply his amusements and pleasures, are the two great objects to which he firft directs his endeavours, though commonly, as might be forefeen, with little advantage to his real comfort. Perhaps in a more advanced ftage of life, willing to perfuade himfelf that public meafures are the fources of private mifery, he commences a reformer of laws and government, and continues to urge his remonftrances, and to form his projects, till after many ineffectual attempts to mend the world, and reduce it to his plans of political perfection, he at laft finds it wifeft to bear with patience what he cannot remedy.

To gain a juft view of what is attainable in our prefent ftate is therefore
a point

a point of the greatest consequence, as we cannot otherwise properly regulate our conduct, and avoid those many disappointments to which visionary theorists and adventurers are liable.

If we look back upon what has actually been accomplished during a course of several thousand years, (a sufficient time surely for experiment,) and thence form our judgment of what is really practicable, we shall be taught a lesson of great moderation in our designs and expectations. After all the attempts of philosophers and divines, moralists and legislators, when a wise observer looks round upon the world, and sees how much evil, moral and physical, still remains, he will not be disposed to place much confidence in his own schemes of redress, or be surprized if he is called to share in the general calamity; he will see that all which can be done is to mitigate

gate those evils which cannot be cured,
and to alleviate those burdens which
cannot be removed.

Though the political grievances which
exist in various parts of the world are
numerous, and sometimes very difficult
to be borne, yet compared with the other
evils that besiege human life on every
side, they are few and inconsiderable.
Wherever he is, man is exposed to sick-
ness and death, to domestic cares and
vicissitudes, to the unkindness and loss
of friends and the malice of enemies,
to the torture of unruly passions, and to
those innumerable vexations, without
name or description, which, like swarms
of locusts, devour up all the verdure of
his condition.

“ How small of all that human hearts endure,
That part, which laws or kings can cause or
cure !”

In

In short, man is troubled with a corrupt heart, and a guilty conscience, the greatest of all evils, and the sources of all the rest; which will pursue him through all governments, and from which he can find relief in none, except in that which is *not of this world*.

When we therefore feel dissatisfied with ourselves, or with others, we ought carefully to enquire whether it does not arise from those general causes, which act nearly with equal force under every administration of public affairs, unless it be extreme and violent.

And let it again be observed, since no art can act beyond the capacity of the matter, we should take care not to expect ~~too~~ much from the wisest polity operating upon so untoward a subject as man. We should not expect legislators to be invested with the powers of Amphion, who,

who, by the music of his harp, is said to have reared the walls of Thebis ; nor imagine that the erection of a state is like the composition of a poem, in which the author is at liberty to cull or create his matter, and to work it up to the height of his genius ; whereas the politician must take his materials as he finds them, and be content to give them such forms as they are willing to receive.

Indeed, had men no natural repugnance to reason, and to reasonable laws and government, as some have imagined ; and would fall into their proper places in society at the voice of a wise legislation, and go on in the quiet discharge of their proper duties ; then might we expect to see political fabrics rising in all the proportions of moral mathematics, whose duration would be commensurate with time itself. But the case is far otherwise, and has so been uniformly considered

before the present times. " Political writers," says Machiavel, " have laid it down as a first principle, of which all history demonstrates the truth, that whoever would found a state, and enact proper laws for the government of it, must presuppose that all men are naturally corrupt, and will not fail to discover their depravity whenever a fair opportunity offers; for though it may possibly lie concealed awhile, on account of some secret reason which does not then appear to men of small experience, yet Time (which is therefore justly called the father of truth,) commonly brings it to light in the end *." " Would to heaven," says

* Polit. Disc. on Livy, b. i. c. 3.—To the same purpose Hooker speaks in his *Ecclesiastical Polity*: " Laws politic, (says he) ordained for external order and regiment amongst men, are never framed as they should be, unless presuming the

says Helvetius, "that virtue was our natural inheritance! What pleasure would it give me to find all men good! But by persuading them that they are good already, I should slacken their ardour to become so; I should call them good, and help to render them wicked *."

Yet this natural privation of virtue is no insuperable difficulty in the way of modern policy, which it seems has every resource within itself, and can *teach virtue* as well as govern the virtuous. Socrates,

the will of man to be inwardly obstinate, rebellious, and averse from all obedience to the sacred laws of his nature: in a word, unless presuming man to be in regard of his depraved mind, little better than a wild beast, they do accordingly provide notwithstanding so to frame his outward actions, that they be no hindrance to the common good, for which societies are instituted; unless they do this, they are not perfect." B. i. p. 8;

* Helv. de l'Homme, sect. v. ch. ii.

it is true, when he is introduced discoursing with Meno upon the question, Whether virtue is capable of being taught? at length sums up the whole in this manner: "If," says he, "we have rightly conducted our enquiry, this is the conclusion, *that virtue is neither derived from nature or instruction, but is a divine gift or allotment* *." It appears there were at that time certain sophists, who went about pretending to *teach virtue*, and this upon mere human principles, just as they would teach some secular art or science, without looking for any superior aid or assistance; these Socrates encountered in his usual way by argument and raillery; and was Socrates to rise again, he would, doubtless, encounter in

* Εἰ δὲ νυν ἡμεῖς ἐν παντί τῳ λόγῳ ἴσῳ καλῶς ἐξηγήσασθαι—ἀρετὴν ἂν εἴη οὔτε φύσει, οὔτε διδασκίῳ, ἀλλὰ θεῶν μέρη.

See Plato's Meno (sub finem.)

the same strain those legislative sophists, who have lately set up the same pretensions.

It might indeed be granted to these sages, if that was all they intended, that a certain kind and degree of virtue is producible by human institutions : but when they endeavour to substitute this in the place of that genuine virtue which is the offspring of religion, we must take the liberty to charge the attempt either upon their ignorance, or their design to impose upon their fellow-creatures in a point which most highly concerns them. *That* virtue which is learned in the schools of human policy must partake of the baseness of its original, is neither much to be depended on in this world, nor is likely to meet with any recompence in another.

What is possible to be done however by civil regulations, ought diligently to be endeavoured; they may powerfully restrain vice, though their influence be less in promoting virtue; and may remove many obstacles to piety, though its progress depends upon higher causes.

The limited operation of human laws is partly to be ascribed to their own imperfection, and partly to the want of fit means to carry them into execution. "Give me," said Archimedes, "where to place my engines, and I will move the earth." Was any part of society perfectly uncorrupt, it would afford a stable ground on which the powers of government might rest and act with an energy and effect that has never yet been experienced. As things now are, no entirely sound part is to be found; *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint*; the legislator and magistrate are
of

of the same depraved mass with the people, and while they govern others have need themselves to be controuled by the universal laws of reason and equity.

If, therefore, the situation of a people is such as to afford redress for gross violations of liberty and property, and a comfortable subsistence to the honest and industrious, it is all that can be expected from political wisdom, operating in the most favourable circumstances.

The example of the Jewish nation is alone sufficient to confound all Utopian politics. Never was there a people that had *statutes and judgments so righteous*, besides the privilege of consulting the divine oracle upon every extraordinary emergence. No nation was ever so eminently the care of heaven, nor any other country so highly favoured with the

bounties of nature as the land of Judea. *A land, says Moses, of brooks of water, of fountains, and depths that spring out of vallies and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass* *. Or as a prophet describes it, *a land flowing with milk and honey; which is the glory of all lands* †. Yet amidst all these blessings and advantages, *the people tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies, but turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers* ‡; they were ungrateful and rebellious, and in consequence became a prey to the sword

* Deut. viii. 7—9.

† Ezek. xx. 6.

‡ Psal. lxxviii. 56—57.

of their enemies, and to other fore calamities.

If then the provisions made by infinite wisdom failed to secure the obedience and prosperity of a highly distinguished nation, what can be expected from the laws and regulations of men? If, under a theocracy, a perverse people brought distress and ruin upon themselves, we cannot wonder if the same should happen under the best human form and administration of government. Should you say, We are not Jews;—it is true;—But we are men; and therefore subject to like passions with other men, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Should any modern Solon or Lycurgus think himself a greater legislator than Moses, and that by dint of philosophy only he was able to construct a political system, in which virtue and public good

would more effectually be consulted than under the Jewish theocracy ; let him not suppose that any sober man will admit his presumption for proof, or lend any credit to his speculations before he sees them substantiated in practice.

To guard against wrong impressions from political projectors, we should always remember, that the question of laws and government is to be determined by their relation to the particular circumstances in which a people is placed. " I could have framed better laws," said Solon, " but not for the Athenians." Besides their moral and physical situation, the civil habits of nations are to be considered, which often dispose them to regard, with a favourable partiality, even the defects of the government they have been long under ; which therefore, on the whole, may suit them better than another theoretically more perfect. And

it is good for every man to cherish in himself and his fellow-citizens a generous predilection for the political frame and constitution of his own country, without invidiously comparing it with that of others. As when Sir Robert Melvil was asked by queen Elizabeth whether herself or the queen of Scots was the greater beauty, after a prudent pause upon so delicate a question, replied, *Your majesty is the fairest woman in England, and my mistress in Scotland.*

The British constitution has now for a considerable period been the object of zealous attachment at home, and of admiration abroad; after struggling through the obstructions of many ages, it attained at the revolution to a purity and vigour which has given an energy before unknown to the exertions of a great nation, in manufactures and commerce, in arts and sciences, while every good citizen

has

has reposed in security under its shadow. It must therefore be perfect madness, after such experience of its effects, to aim a blow at the root, and attempt its extirpation, instead of prudently endeavouring to lop away the decayed, or prune the luxuriant branches.

One of the greatest mischiefs to this country has been its wealth, followed by its inseparable train of luxury and poverty, pride and discontent.

Happier, perhaps, in this respect, is the homely Swiss, who, from his local situation, is cut off from foreign commerce, and having little hereditary property is unable to procure those indulgencies, which, by reducing men to idleness and beggary, prepare them for sedition and rebellion. The Swiss is pleased with the government because he is pleased with himself; a simple mode of life, and

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a rational liberty, aided by the sublimities of nature around him, inspire him with a secret gladness, and an enthusiastic attachment to his native mountains.

“ Dear is that shed to which his soul conforms,
And dear that hill which lifts him to the storms!”

In estimating the merits of a government, regard is to be had, as we have observed, to the people governed. A nation during its youth, while simple manners prevail, and the principles of industry and frugality continue in vigour, requires much less wisdom to manage it than an old nation, refined to artificial life, and in possession of the objects which the other is striving to obtain. In this stage, it is hardly possible to recover a country to its sober habits, or to preserve it from the fatal consequences of inveterate vice and dissipation; and to charge upon the existing government all the evils which have been accumulating per-
haps

haps for ages, must be highly unreasonable and unjust.

You may say, I am not only dissatisfied with the present rulers, I would have our whole civil state dissolved, all rank and title and property abolished, and the entire political system recomposed after a better model. Your ideas, it must be acknowledged, are bold, and bespeak the genius of modern philosophy. But do you understand clearly what you mean by a better model; and have you well considered, that it is often better to adopt the form to the matter, than with violence to reduce the matter to the form? Have you seriously counted the cost, and are you *sure* that the probable benefit is greater than the certain risk? If not, you are a dangerous projector, and had you power to second your speculations, might prove a fatal enemy to your country.

It

It has often been justly observed upon this subject, that no prudent man would pull down his mansion, the ancient residence of his family, and the admiration of all beholders, at the suggestion of some modern architect, *that it was old, that it was built at different periods, and therefore irregular, having some apartments too large, and others too small, with many winding and narrow passages*; if it was probable, that notwithstanding all its imperfections, a better would not be erected in its stead.

I mean not to insinuate, that the political state of a country may not be such as to render a general revolution advisable, provided it can be accomplished without war and violence; nay, further, it might be allowed, that the necessity of the case may be so great and pressing, as to justify even a recourse to arms, after

every

every gentler method had been tried without effect.

Short of this unhappy necessity a wise man will be disposed to sit down quietly, and make the best of the existing circumstances; while things remain tolerable he will be satisfied, as knowing that human life, in its ordinary tenour, admits of nothing more.

It may happen, indeed, that a nation may be raised above its natural pitch, whether by the ascendant genius of particular individuals, or by the influence of some extraordinary conjuncture. A patriot king, or a powerful and disinterested minister, may inspire a people with a fresh portion of public spirit; or a sense of common danger may suspend private competitions and state factions, and unite all parties in a regard to the general interest;

terest ; or a people having emancipated themselves, and asserted their just rights and liberties, after a hard struggle against oppression, may be borne on for a while under the generous impulsion of true patriotism ; yet these causes being only transient and occasional, the selfish passions, which are sure always to be at work, though not always openly, will not fail to recover in the end their former influence.

When this is duly considered, we shall not be forward to entertain great expectations from any changes of men and measures or the most promising revolutions, unless accompanied with a general prevalence of true virtue, which only can give permanence and effect to the best establishments of human policy.

Viewing therefore equitably the state of public affairs, a wise and good citizen
will

will take care to be modest in his demands upon his superiors, and not pettishly to quarrel with his station in the community, though it may happen to be less privileged than that of some others.

Should he be obliged to earn his bread by daily labour, he will consider, that the very existence of society requires that a large proportion of its members should lie under this necessity; and supposing him in a land of freedom, though the fruit of his toil should be small, he will not forget that he enjoys it in security; equal in this respect to the proudest of his fellow-citizens, and superior to the highest subject of a despotic government. Again, instead of looking with envy on those above him, he will endeavour to reap the solid advantages of his humble condition in health and content, blessings which he sees often paid down as the price of wealth and distinction.

Should

Should he be raised a little higher in the order of society, and together with liberty and security should enjoy a modest competence, he would see still further reason to be satisfied with his lot. Calmly looking round on human life he would perceive himself in one of her most eligible situations, notwithstanding a few civil disadvantages he might happen to lie under, which, if warranted by sound policy, he would approve, and though unwisely imposed he would bear with good humour; nay, would be inclined to consider them as a happy bar to his ambition or avarice, and a security to his present peace.

What then shall we think of him, who, exempt from every political inconvenience, and in possession of all the means of a virtuous and noble independence, is still dissatisfied with his condition, and ready to quarrel with the general state of

M affairs,

affairs, because, alas ! he is distinguished by no place at court, or not invested with some public office of honour or profit, or perhaps because he is not gratified with some title or trapping of nobility ? Such as this, however, is the preposterous ambition we have sometimes to lament in the conduct of a country gentleman, who chooses rather to obtrude his services where they are neither required nor wanted, and waste his days and nights at the levees and in the antichambers of men in power, than to reside with the dignity of a prince upon his paternal inheritance, diffusing happiness to all around him ! To descend from this elevation to a state of low dependence, to sigh after places or pensions, ribbands or titles, and if he cannot obtain them, to set himself in opposition to the laws or government of his country, is the part of a man lost to nature and true honour, and prepared to sell his birthright,

birthright, like Esau, for a mess of pottage.

Were it possible to work upon such depravity, we might oppose the example of a great statesman *, who tells us in his *Essay upon Gardening*, that as a country life was the inclination of his youth, so it was the pleasure of his age; and that of the many great employments which had fallen to his share, he had never asked or sought for any, but had often endeavoured to escape from them all into the ease and freedom of a private scene.

Should there be found a class of men in a country who stand excluded from its public honours and emoluments, merely for what they deem a purer faith or worship, it would lie upon them in a peculiar manner to be studious of a quiet sub-

* Sir W. Temple.

mission to the powers that are, lest the genuineness of their profession should be called in question. Good Christians desire no more than to enjoy liberty of conscience, together with a reasonable security for their persons and property, and are of all men least disposed to clog the measures of government, only because they are not admitted to share its favours, which they willingly resign to those who have no better hopes or prospects. Knowing themselves not to be of this world, they have little expectation from it; and when they step forth on the public stage, it is at the clear call of duty and of their country, and not from any corrupt inducements of honour or profit.

There are few things to be met with more odious, than a busy meddler in politics pretending to religion; nor is the difference much whether he list himself under the banner of Whig or Tory.

Above

Above all, this is odious in a teacher of christianity, especially if he suffers it to appear in his public ministrations. To make the pulpit an engine of court flattery, or a *drum ecclesiastic* to beat up for patriotic recruits, is a conduct deserving the severest reprehension. A true minister of the Prince of Peace, whose kingdom is not of this world, directs his attention to higher objects, and shuns the entanglements of secular affairs.

It is an old charge against those who have made a profession of true religion, that they were *movers of sedition, hurtful to kings and provinces, paying neither toll, tribute, nor custom*; and this charge, it must be acknowledged, has not always been groundless. The Jews are known to have been a seditious people, and sometimes to have proceeded to actual rebellion; nor have there been wanting men bearing the Christian name, who

have followed their example ; men, as described by an apostle, *presumptuous, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities* ; who have said, *with our tongues will we prevail, who is lord over us ?* Nay, such monsters have sprung up in the Christian church, who, instead of yielding due obedience to the existing powers, have attempted to seize the government into their own hands, from a fanatical conceit, *that dominion is founded in grace* : As if the design of the Gospel was to dissolve all our civil obligations, to reverse the order and state of the world, *to set servants on horses, and bring down princes to walk like servants upon the earth*. The primitive Christians knew nothing of this frenzy ; and their passive conduct under the most barbarous tyrants is a standing reproach to such modern Christians, who if every thing does not come up to their mind, and tally with their *code of rights*, can think of nothing less than

than *binding their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.*

Christianity is so far from superseding the duties arising from our natural or civil relations, that it binds them more strongly upon us, and in forming good men, forms good subjects. From a supreme regard to God, its disciples will cheerfully submit themselves to every *ordinance of man*, whether it be to the king, or to those commissioned by him, *for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well*; and thus endeavour by their peaceable deportment to put to silence the calumnies of their enemies.

To live contentedly under the best government, it is necessary not to go curiously in search of mischief; like certain patriots belonging to a little German state, who some years ago, as I remem-

ber to have read, beset the court with their clamours, and upon being asked what grievances they laboured under, made answer, "None that they knew of, but that some such might exist, and they came to enquire after them." Men that will thus seek after trouble deserve to find it; and in a world such as this, they seldom need to go far without meeting with what they seek. A prudent man will be otherwise minded; if he enjoys at present his liberty and property, he will not idly torment himself with imaginations of danger he does not see, or of distresses that he does not feel; and will leave it to the public guardians to watch against evils that are too remote for his optics: And should they even come home to his sense and feeling, he will be careful not to aggravate them, or rashly to charge them upon those at the helm of affairs, remembering that it is the lot of human life to suffer under innumerable

numerable calamities, in spite of all human precaution or vigilance.

It is the misfortune of some men to reap no other fruit from their patriotism, than their own fears and jealousies. The national credit is in danger, trade is declining, foreign nations are conspiring against us, or some dreadful plot is hatching at home against our rights and liberties; though they see every man going his own way, and acting as his interest or his pleasure dictates, and every market crowded with wares and customers. Should it be said, these are no infallible signs of national prosperity;—at least it must be allowed they are no infallible signs of approaching beggary and chains. And while any hopeful symptoms remain, a true patriot will augur well of his country.

In a word, while a government continues to maintain the order and promote the general happiness of society, it deserves to be supported, whatever be its form and administration. If indeed it can be improved or exchanged for a better in a peaceable way, it ought to be done; but an attempt to subvert such a government by force is not to be vindicated, war being an evil which nothing can justify but the most urgent necessity, and this in the present supposition has no place. A good citizen, therefore, before he thinks of appealing to the sword, will submit to many stretches of prerogative, to many partial and inexpedient laws, to many abuses of power in inferior magistrates; he will submit till government is degenerated to such a degree as no longer to answer the end of its institution, *the common good*. While this on the whole is promoted, he will be ready to do full justice to the virtues and abilities

of

of those in power, and to extenuate their faults and their imperfections. He will consider, as it is elegantly expressed in Tacitus, that “we ought to bear with the luxury and avarice of rulers, as we endure barren years, storms, and other disorders of nature; that there will be vices while there are men, yet not without some intermission; and that they are compensated by greater benefits *.”

* Quomodo sterilitatem, aut nimios imbres, aut cetera naturæ mala; ita luxum aut avaritiam dominantium tolerate. Vitia erunt donec homines, sed neque hæc continua, & meliorum interventu pensantur. Tac. Hist. lib. 4. cap. 74.

SECTION

SECTION V.

THE WAY TO LIVE HAPPILY UNDER ALL
GOVERNMENTS AND IN ALL SITUATIONS.

AS next to the glory of God happiness is the great end of human existence, and notwithstanding the apostacy of our nature, so many notices of divine philanthropy, confirmed and ratified by express declarations of scripture, appearing through all the works of creation and providence, we have reason to believe that no man's condition, without his own great default, ever becomes so utterly hopeless and wretched, but that some path lies from it, which if pursued with persevering diligence, will bring him at last out of darkness and misery into a state of light and comfort.

The

The chief sources of man's unhappiness are to be found in his guilty conscience and his disordered passions; and till some effectual remedy be applied to these evils, he cannot long be at rest under any government or in any situation.

A sense of guilt naturally produces fear; fear of divine displeasure, and of its awful consequences beyond this life, and while a man lies under such an apprehension, the most prosperous condition of affairs, public or private, must yield him a very disturbed satisfaction.

To relieve the mind from this dread has been one great object of philosophical pursuit, and a principal design of every species of religion, whether true or false; all the penances and pilgrimages, the rites and sacrifices that have been practised in different countries and ages, have chiefly had this end in view; an end far
beyond

beyond their virtue or efficacy to attain, and which, as scripture strongly warrants us to hold, could only be accomplished by the sacrifice of Christ.

The deist I know will dispute the ground I am now upon, and will tell me, That a man of virtue has no need of any atonement either to quiet his conscience, or to render him acceptable to the Deity.

If in his idea of virtue he includes piety, it will be granted him that a man of virtue is both entitled to peace of conscience and to divine acceptance; but after this concession he must allow me to insist, that no one in this sense ever became a man of virtue who proudly rejected the aids held out to him by revelation. And if in defiance of apostles and prophets he should still presume to wrap himself in his own excellence and sufficiency, I must leave him to the grave
and

and monitory rebuke of a celebrated wit and patriot: "Whoever," says he, "to the prejudice of our Saviour's merit, and debasing the operation of the Holy Ghost, shall attribute too much to his own natural vigour and performances, will be in some danger of finding his virtue *perniciosa ad salutem* *."

True peace of conscience is connected with the moderation of all the passions, which it is powerfully calculated to produce, and by which in return it becomes itself more confirmed and established.

A man who is thus at peace with God and with himself, can never justly be deemed unhappy; for though he should meet with his full share of suffering from the political and the various other evils

* Sir Andr. Marvel's Rehearsal transposed, Part II. p. 251.

that

that abound in the world, he will not want topics which may afford him support and consolation amidst them all.

Amongst these, as the doctrine of a superintending providence chiefly deserves attention, I shall here endeavour briefly to state, what has occurred to me in reflecting upon this important subject.

The providence of God comprehends all creatures, with all their operations, and every circumstance attending them; nothing is too vast or too minute for its notice or controul.

All the events that happen throughout the universe may be ascribed to divine appointment, except the voluntary determinations of free agents *.

* By a *voluntary determination* I understand such a one as might have been forborne by the agent in the precise circumstances, internal and external, in which it was formed.

Therefore

Therefore all events, such free volitions excepted, must bear some direct impression of God, of his wisdom or power, of his goodness or justice; in short, of his infinite perfections. And it will make no difference as to our present argument, whether such events proceed immediately from the divine agency, or through the intervention of second causes; whether they are separate acts, or the consequences of general laws.

Of that energy by which effects are produced, and the course of things is continued, we know nothing. Of causation, whether original or secondary, we have no idea. How the world was made at the *fiat* of the Creator, how one body is put in motion at the impulse of another, or how an act of the mind is connected with the motion of a limb, we are entirely ignorant. It is sufficient to know that all effects either arise immediately from the

N

power

power of God, without any medium or instrumentality, or according to those constitutions and laws which he has established.

Though our free volitions are exempt from every kind of necessity moral as well as physical, they are nevertheless subject to the influence of our dispositions, our views, and external circumstances, all which are under a divine superintending direction.

God, by restraining our evil inclinations, and inspiring others, can easily change our determinations, without doing the least violence to our liberty. He tells Abimelech in a dream, *I withheld thee from sinning against me* *. And Laban says to Jacob, *It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt, but the God of your*

* Gen. xx. 6.

father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad * : And it would appear from all the circumstances of the story, that the heart of Esau was under a special influence when he received his brother Jacob with so much kindness and generosity †.

And as God can rule the will by a direct act, or by impressing the passions, he can do the same through the medium of the understanding. There is something unaccountable in those trains of ideas that pass through our minds ; some of them we know may be resolved into the principle of association ; yet how often are there trains that appear to us perfectly new, and which had no previous tracks in the imagination that we can discover ; and known trains are some-

* Gen. xxxi. 29. † Compare Gen. xxvii. 41.—xxxii. 11.—xxxiii. 4—9.

times broken and interrupted by the incursion of ideas of which the memory has no recollection. All this is wonderful to us, yet certainly is not without his superintendence, who at once regulates the course of every particle of matter, and every motion in the intellectual world.

The thoughts of a young man in deliberating upon a plan of life may first run in a commercial line; this may be crossed by some other leading him to law, physic, or divinity; or some new track presenting itself to his view, may divert him into a project which never occurred to him before. And thus ideal trains, over which he has very little controul, may conduct him to very different determinations respecting his future calling or employment in the world.

Take another illustration. When Caesar upon his breach with Pompey had reached

reached the Rubicon, he is said to have made a halt at the bank of this river, and seriously to have debated with himself the business before him, his mind inclining now one way and then another, as the danger of the enterprize, the calamities it might draw after it, the perverseness of his enemies, and the glory of victory, presented themselves by turns to his view. In this state of suspense a single idea more or less might have produced a different resolution, and the world have taken another course. "At last," says Plutarch, "borne on by an extraordinary impulse, he would reason no longer, but committing himself to his fortune plunged into the Rubicon, crying, *The die is cast.*" Who must not acknowledge that the heart of Cæsar on this critical occasion, was *in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water* *.

* Prov. xxi. 1.

After a man has formed his resolution, the execution of it may depend upon a thousand circumstances beyond his prudence or management. The winds or the waves, or other contingencies of nature, which he can neither foresee nor controul; or the dishonesty, the humour, or negligence of other men who are necessary to his purpose, may either suddenly dash, or gradually obstruct and defeat his best concerted projects. A single untoward incident may baffle his ablest efforts, and teach him his dependence upon that providence which has all nature at command, and which only can order the unruly wills and affections of men.

There is a beautiful instance in the story of Esther of this divine superintendence, in furnishing views and disposing circumstances for the accomplishment of a great national deliverance.

Haman

Haman having conceived a violent resentment against Mordecai the Jew, to satiate his vengeance procured an edict for the destruction of all the Jews who were scattered through the Persian empire. On the very night when Haman meant to solicit an order for the execution of Mordecai, the king happening not to sleep, to amuse his thoughts called for the public records, and that part being accidentally read to him which recited his deliverance, by means of Mordecai, from a dangerous conspiracy, he was enquiring, what reward had been conferred on his deliverer for this service, when Haman appeared in the outer court *to speak to the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for the purpose.* Upon his admittance, being asked, *What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?* and having answered according to his ideas, he was commissioned to do all that honour to

Mordecai which he had imagined would have been done to himself, and when he had discharged this mortifying office, was hanged upon the gallows he had prepared for his adversary. The sanguinary edict he had obtained against the Jews at large was counteracted by another, and in every province this devoted nation had *joy and gladness*, and many of the people of the land became Jews, *for the fear of the Jews fell upon them*. That such an extraordinary coincidence of circumstances as we have here stated, could have taken place without a particular direction of providence, no man can suppose whose judgment is governed by the established laws of probability.

We have a more agreeable and domestic instance of this particular direction in the story of Abraham's servant, when he went to seek a wife for his young master Isaac. Upon his arrival at the city

city of Nahor in Mesopotamia, we are
 told, " He made his camels to kneel
 " down without the city, by a well of
 " water at the time of the evening, even
 " the time that women go out to draw
 " water. And he said, O Lord God of
 " my master Abraham, I pray thee send
 " me good speed this day, and shew
 " kindness unto my master Abraham.
 " Behold, I stand here by the well of
 " water, and the daughters of the men of
 " the city come out to draw water : And
 " let it come to pass that the damsel to
 " whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher
 " I pray thee, that I may drink ; and
 " she shall say, Drink, and I will give
 " thy camels drink also : Let the same
 " be she that thou hast appointed for
 " thy servant Isaac : and thereby shall I
 " know that thou hast shewed kindness
 " to my master. And it came to pass
 " before he had done speaking, that
 " behold, Rebekah came out that was
 " born

“ born to Bethuel, son of Milcah the
 “ wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother,
 “ with her pitcher upon her shoulder :
 “ and she went down to the well, and
 “ filled her pitcher, and came up. And
 “ the servant ran to meet her, and said,
 “ Let me (I pray thee) drink a little
 “ water of thy pitcher. And she said,
 “ Drink, my lord : and she hasted, and
 “ let down her pitcher upon her hand,
 “ and gave him drink. And when she
 “ had done giving him drink, she said,
 “ I will draw water for thy camels also,
 “ until they have done drinking. And
 “ she hasted, and emptied her pitcher
 “ into the trough, and ran again unto
 “ the well to draw water, and drew for
 “ all his camels. And the man wonder-
 “ ing at her held his peace, to wit whether
 “ the Lord had made his journey prof-
 “ perous, or not. And it came to pass
 “ as the camels had done drinking, that
 “ the man took a golden ear-ring, of
 “ half

“ half a shekel weight, and two bracelets
 “ for her hands, and ten shekels weight
 “ of gold : And said, Whose daughter
 “ art thou ? tell me, I pray thee : is
 “ there room in thy father’s house for
 “ us to lodge in ? And she said unto
 “ him, I am the daughter of Bethuel
 “ the son of Milcah, which she bore
 “ unto Nahor. She said moreover unto
 “ him, We have both straw and pro-
 “ vender enough, and room to lodge in.
 “ And the man bowed his head, and
 “ worshipped the Lord. And he said,
 “ Blessed be the Lord God of my master
 “ Abraham, who hath not left destitute
 “ my master of his mercy and his truth :
 “ I being in the way, the Lord led me to
 “ the house of my master’s brethren *.”

There is so much simplicity and nature,
 such evident traces of divine conduct in
 this little patriarchal story, that I could
 not forbear to recite it at length.

* Gen. xxiv.

The providence of God in the ordinary course of the world, though less marked and conspicuous, is no less real; though it lie concealed under the operation of general laws, framed with such incomprehensible skill as to contain provisions for the smallest events, or hide itself under the exercise of human policy and prudence, its efficacy is still the same; even the sins and follies of men by its secret conduct accomplish the ends of infinite wisdom and holiness.

Thus the divine superintendence, though generally unperceived and disregarded, is unremitting and universal, comprehending equally the private affairs of individuals and the general interests of nations. "There is nothing," says the Roman orator and philosopher, "which the supreme governor of the universe, when he looks down upon the earth, beholds with more delight, than those
bodies

bodies and collections of men who live united together by the same common laws *." The scriptures represent the Most High as ruling *in the kingdom of men*, and giving it to whomsoever he will †; as *planting and building up* a people, and again for their sins *plucking up and destroying them* ‡. Agreeably to this doctrine, two of the most celebrated heathen legislators §, who lived some centuries before the Christian era, made religion the foundation of their political institutions; and Cicero, after their example, prefaces his laws with saying, "That every citizen ought first to be

* Nihil est cœli illi principi Deo, qui omnem hunc mundum regit, quod quidem in terris fit, acceptius, quàm concilia cœtusque hominum iure sociati, quæ civitates appellantur. Somnium Scipionis.

† Dan. iv. 25.

‡ Jer. xviii. 7—10.

§ Zaleucus and Charondas

persuaded,

persuaded, that the gods are the masters and rulers of the world, and that all things are under their power and providence."

If men held a nearer converse with the Deity, they would enjoy a quicker perception of his hand in all things; where they now can see only nature and human agency, they would discern the Lord of nature and the Sovereign of the world; the wheels of providence, as in the vision of Ezekiel, would appear *full of eyes round about*.

Upon these principles a good man, such as we have above described, may live without anxiety amidst all the disorders of human life, as sharing in the special protection of that Almighty being whose dominion is absolute and universal.

If, notwithstanding all his prudent diligence, he is poor and necessitous, he will look to him who *feeds the sparrows* and *clothes the lillies*; if he is threatened with injury, he will consider that he who has *all hearts in his hands* can easily restrain the mischievous intent or divert it into another channel; or if he has actually suffered wrong, he will reflect that it could not have happened without his wife's permission who is able to convert it to his greater advantage; nay, he has ground to be assured, that while he is walking in the ways of piety and virtue, all things, whether prosperous or adverse, are co-operating for his real and permanent benefit.

Such a sense of things, when pure and genuine, must powerfully tend to extinguish in him all discontent, all envy, all resentment, all unmanly fear. He may say to his most formidable adversary,

lary, *Thou canst have no power against me unless it be given thee from above.* Thy malignity is indeed thine own, but is in itself impotent; and when armed with power is under a superior controul. I fear God and fear none but him.

Of this heroic piety there have been eminent examples in all ages; and especially under the Christian dispensation the instances are innumerable of those who, supported by its promises, have undergone the most grievous trials with patience and chearfulness.

Could we at this day look into the interior state of our own country, we should doubtless discover many examples of such who in humble silence endure the oppressor's wrong, and *all the whips and scorns of time*, borne up by the hopes that Christianity inspires. Many servants under hard masters, many among the labouring

labouring poor who are disabled by age or sickness, or perishing for want of employment, many in garrets or in cellars, unheeded and unknown, have found the art of possessing their souls in patience, by an access to resources with which the great and opulent are seldom acquainted. They have learned to pray to their Father in secret, and to cast all their care upon him who careth for them, while neglected or despised by their fellow-creatures. Compared with these, the heroes and sages of the world, in a moral estimate, are vain and insignificant.

When a good man is led to contemplate the politics of the world, it is with this conviction, that all the consultations of states and princes are under a divine superintendence. He is satisfied that *there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor*

O

counsel

counsel against the Lord * ; that *the de-
ceived and the deceiver are his* † ; that
he *taketh away the heart of the chiefs of
a people, and causeth them to wander in a
wilderness where there is no way* ‡ : thus
when he mingled a spirit of giddiness in
their public deliberations, *the princes of
Zoan became fools, the counsel of the wise
counsellors of Pharoah became brutish, they
seduced Egypt, and caused her to err in all
her works, as a drunkard staggereth in
his vomit* §.

He is equally persuaded, that in the
execution of their purposes, the princes
and powers of the earth are under the
same powerful direction. When the
haughty Sennacherib boasted of the

* Prov. xvi. 30. † Job xii. 16. ‡ Ib.
xii. 24. § Isaiah xix. 13, 14. (Bp. Lowth's
translation.)

strength of his hand and of his wisdom, the prophet thus address him; *Shall the axe best itself against him that beweth therewith, or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it*?* Which shews that this proud Assyrian, in all the career of his successful ambition, was an instrument in the hands of the universal Sovereign, to do what *his counsel determined before to be done.* Accordingly, when beyond the line marked out by this counsel, he had resolved upon the conquest of Judea and its capital, and vaunted as if he had already accomplished his purpose, his army was suddenly destroyed, and himself slain upon his return to his own land. *Because thy rage against me, says God by his prophet, is come up into my ears, I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips,*

* Isaiah x. 15.

and turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.—He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, by the way that he came by the same shall he return, for I will defend this city to save it for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake.* . . And the pious christian, who views the dispensations of Providence in the light of scripture, will acknowledge the same overruling hand in every conquest and defeat, in every national change and revolution, that has happened since the world began.

He will be sensible that such events, however calamitous they may be, can never take place without wise and just reasons in the divine mind. He knows that when the Canaanites were exterminated, it was *because their land was de-*

* 2 Kings, chap. xix.

*filed, and the measure of their iniquities full**; that when destruction fell upon Tyre, *that crowning city whose merchants were princes, it was to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth*†; that when vengeance was threatened against Ninevah, *it was for its wickedness which had ascended to heaven*‡. From these and innumerable other instances he will collect, that public as well as private calamities have respect to moral evil, and that it is never wantonly, or out of mere dominion, that God afflicts or grieves the children of men.

The same divine records will help him to trace the conduct of Providence in the temporary triumph of wicked na-

* Gen. xv. 16. and Lev. xviii. 24, 25.

† Isaiah xxviii. 8, 9.

‡ Jonah i. 2.

tions, by presenting them to his view as scourges for the punishment of other nations that are still more wicked, and doomed after the service is performed, to be cast away or destroyed themselves. A few passages in proof and illustration of this point, which the reader may peruse when he is disposed and at leisure, I dismiss to the note below *, fearing,
left

* The Almighty is thus introduced speaking of Sennacherib above-named; “ O Assyrian, the
“ rod of mine anger. I will send him against
“ an hypocritical nation, and against the people
“ of my wrath. Howbeit he meaneth not so,
“ neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his
“ heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.
“ Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when
“ the Lord hath performed his whole work on
“ mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish
“ the fruit of the stout heart of the king of
“ Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.”
Isaiah x. 5—12. A similar declaration is made
respecting Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon:
“ Thus

et I have already put his patience to a sufficient trial by my copious citation of scrip-

“ Thus saith the Lord of hosts, because ye have
 “ not heard my words, behold I will send and take
 “ all the families of the north, and Nebuchad-
 “ nezzar king of Babylon my servant, and will
 “ bring them against this land, and against all
 “ the nations round about, and will utterly de-
 “ stroy them.—And it shall come to pass when
 “ seventy years are accomplished, that I will
 “ punish the king of Babylon and that nation for
 “ their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans,
 “ and will make it perpetual desolations.” Jer.
 xxv. 8—12.

In a prophecy relating to the last named prince, a reason is assigned for his success against Egypt, which reflects a beautiful light on the equity of Providence in rewarding even temporal services. “ It came to pass,” says the prophet Ezekiel, “ in the seven and twentieth year, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, “ Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his “ army to serve a great service against Tyrus: “ every head was made bald, and every shoulder

scripture ; for which, the impossibility of finding elsewhere those documents which came home to my present purpose, must be my apology.

From what we have briefly suggested upon this topic, and from the examples we have produced, it may appear, that just views of Providence are powerfully calculated to administer support to a man of piety under all reverses, under poverty and oppression, sickness and death. Even

“ was peeled: yet had he no wages nor his
 “ army for Tyrus, for the service he had served
 “ against it. Therefore thus saith the Lord God,
 “ Behold I will give the land of Egypt to Nebu-
 “ chadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take
 “ her multitude, and take her spoil, and take
 “ her prey, and it shall be the wages for his
 “ army: I have given him the land of Egypt for
 “ his labour wherewith he served against it, be-
 “ cause they wrought for me, saith the Lord
 “ God.” Ezekiel xxix. 17—20.

amidst

amidst the waste and desolation of his country, while he may bewail the wickedness or misconduct which brought on the catastrophe, he will find rest in the consideration that it could not have happened without the righteous disposal of the Almighty.

Let it be well observed, that it is only a good man, or in other words, a man who is subdued to the government and grace of God, to whom this support fully belongs, or who is fully capable of it; such a man only has ground for an entire confidence in the divine favour towards him amidst all the disorders and troubles to which he is exposed, or is prepared to acquiesce in all the dispensations of heaven towards mankind in general. Others, as they approach to this character, may expect to share in the consolations annexed to it. To all but the obstinate rebel, who will neither submit

submit to the laws of his Creator, nor listen to the overtures of his mercy, a ray of hope breaks through the thickest gloom of the present state.

One great reason why a wicked man, wicked to the degree now described, can find no satisfaction in the view of Providence, as consisting in the government of God over free agents, is, because it leaves him responsible for his actions, and threatens him with certain vengeance on their account; he is therefore willing to divert his attention from this subject altogether, or perhaps to seek relief in some scheme of necessity, which whatever other misery it may involve, will, if he can thoroughly persuade himself of it, save him at least from the anguish of a guilty conscience, and from the apprehension of any suffering which can properly come under the idea of punishment.

It

It appears therefore of the highest consequence, that in maintaining the sinful volitions of men to be subject to divine controul, we exempt them from every kind of necessitation; lest by contending for the government of God we destroy the responsibility of man, and remove him out of that state of trial which we are taught to believe he is under during the present life.

There is the more need to insist upon this topic, as such endeavours have been used of late to substitute fatalism in the place of providence, and to transform the moral world into a system of intellectual machinery, in which infinite wisdom sees nothing that is not a *necessary and useful part of a perfect whole* *. The

* To God nothing is seen as an evil, but as a necessary and useful part of a perfect whole. Priestley's Doctr. of Necessity, p. 114.

advocates of this scheme would persuade us, that the distinction between things natural and moral is groundless * ; that a man is no more accountable for his vices than for his misfortunes † ; that all remorse of conscience is a deception, and arises entirely from a narrowness of comprehension ‡ ; that a thoroughly enlightened necessitarian, when he looks back upon his actions, sees them all to be perfectly right ; and that the doctrine

* The distinction between things natural and moral entirely ceases on the scheme of necessity. Ibid. p. 115.

† The vices of men come under the class of common evils. Ibid.

‡ You say that remorse of conscience implies that a man thinks he could have acted otherwise than he did. I have no objection to this, at the same time, that I say he deceives himself in that supposition. Pr. Def. of Necessity, p. 62. In the preceding page he ascribes it to *want of comprehension*.

of

of repentance, confession and pardon, are founded upon an *imperfect and fallacious view of things* *.

According to this scheme, the emperor Nero might deliberately have recalled to his remembrance the burning of Rome, which he charged upon the christians; his unnatural practices; the murder of Britannicus and Seneca; of his wives and his mother Agrippina; with all his other enormous crimes, without the least reproach of conscience: since whatever he had done, was both

* It is acknowledged that a necessarian, who, as such, believes that, strictly speaking, nothing goes wrong, cannot accuse himself of having done wrong in the ultimate sense of the words. He has therefore in this strict sense, nothing to do with repentance, confession or pardon, which are all adapted to a different, imperfect, and fallacious view of things. Correspondence with Dr. Price, p. 301.

right in itself, and absolutely inevitable. For want of this knowledge, after the death of Agrippina, as we are told by Suetonius *, he fell under the scourges of a guilty conscience, frequently declaring, that he was haunted by his mother's ghost, and pursued by the whips and burning torches of the furies. Unhappy Nero ! who had not learned that the murder of a mother was a deed which neither called for *repentance*, *confession* or *pardon* !

How would the profound Tiberius, another monster of vice, have rejoiced in the discovery, that he had been guilty.

* Neque tamen sceleris conscientiam, quamquam et militum et senatus populique gratulationibus confirmaretur, aut statim aut unquam postea ferre potuit: sæpe confessus exagitari se maternâ specie, verberibus furiarum, ac tædis ardentibus. Suet. ch. 34.

of nothing which ought either to make him afraid or ashamed! He would not then have expressed himself to the senate in these terms: "What I should write
 " to you, or how I should write to you,
 " or whether I should at all write to you
 " at this time, may all the gods pour
 " upon my head a more terrible vengeance than that I feel myself daily
 " sinking under, if I can tell *." Thus, says Tacitus, was his conscience terrified with the image of his crimes, nor could either his fortune or his solitude afford him the least relief †.

* Quid scribam vobis, P. C. aut quo modo scribam, aut quid omnino non scribam hoc tempore, dii me deaque pejus perdant, quam perire quotidie sentio, si scio. Tac. An. lib. vi. 65.

† Quippe Tiberium non fortuna, non solitudines protegebant, quin tormenta pectoris, suasque ipse penas fateretur. Id. ibid.

To mention only one instance more : With what joy would Judas Iscariot have learned, that he had not sinned *in betraying innocent blood*, when in despair of pardon he threw down the thirty pieces of silver before the high priest, and then went and hanged himself !

Whether any man's moral constitution is strong enough to resist such poison I cannot tell. It was promised to the first christian converts, that *though they drank any deadly thing it should not hurt them* ; and I should look upon it no less miraculous in morals, for any one to admit the scheme of necessity, crude and unqualified as it has lately been presented to the world, without experiencing its destructive effects. Poisons we know may be corrected, and even sometimes made salutary by a due mixture of other ingredients ; and the worst principles, when taken up by good men, commonly

undergo so many modifications and practical corrections, as to become, though not salutary, yet less pernicious.

Say not thou, God hath caused me to err; for he hath no need of the sinful man *. Though this was written by an apocryphal author, I take the sense to be perfectly canonical, and expressly confirmed by canonical scripture. We read in the epistle of James, *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.—Do not err, my beloved brethren; every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights* †. Whence then is evil? This is an ancient question, and the answer to it is one and simple, *from the abuse of liberty*.

* Ecclesiasticus xv. 12.

† James i. 17.

If you press me further and ask, Why the Almighty endued any of his creatures with a power which he foresaw they would abuse? I would answer, Because he foresaw likewise that the abuse might be overruled to ends worthy of his infinite wisdom. If you reply, this is saying but little, and can never satisfy the curiosity of a philosopher.—Allowing this, it may be sufficient notwithstanding to satisfy the modesty of a christian.

There never, I believe, was a time when men delivered their opinions with more hardiness than at present, or with a more frank avowal of their consequences, however shocking they may be to common sense, or offensive to virtue and piety. This bold procedure, although its effect upon weak or corrupt minds is to be often lamented, we may hope is sometimes of service in awakening the caution of the more sober and discern-

discerning. Such as are of this character, upon finding, for instance, that the doctrine of necessity, when followed up with intrepidity, leads to consequences which they justly regard with horror, may learn to look with a prudent jealousy on any opinion that has a close affinity with it, by whatever authority, or under whatever pretences it may come recommended.

The path of truth is often narrow and arduous; like some passages over the Alps, where it is dangerous to look on either side, as by misplacing a single step the traveller plunges down a precipice. The doctrines of providence and human liberty are confessedly of this nature, which should excite the utmost wariness in those who endeavour to trace them, lest they should either degrade man into a piece of mechanism, or with-

draw him from his proper state of dependance ; lest they should philosophize providence into fate, or detract from its overruling direction.

Observing this medium, a good man will keep on his way across the precipices of error, and amidst the winds of warring opinions, unshaken and serene. If he looks back to his original creation it will be with thankfulness, if onward to his final destiny it will be with hope ; and when he surveys the present disordered state of the world, and sees multitudes of his fellow-creatures,

“ Living in hatred, enmity and strife
Among themselves, and levying cruel wars,
Wasting the earth, each other to destroy :”

This, though it will move his sorrow,
will not destroy his peace ; he will view
all this evil under a divine controul, and
unite

unite in reverent confession with the royal prophet, *The wrath of man shall praise God; the remainder of wrath he will restrain* *.

* Pſal. lxxvi. 10.

SECTION VI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

THUS far of the general doctrine of a superintending Providence, and of the support it is capable of affording to good men amidst all the evils which either they contemplate in the world around them, or which they are called to suffer themselves. We shall now add a few particular remarks, drawn indiscriminately from this or other topics, which may contribute to the same purpose.

The power there is in our nature of adapting itself to a wonderful variety of circumstances, may yield some relieving considerations to every benevolent mind
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in surveying the present state of things. Man can derive his nourishment from a greater diversity of food than any other animal, and endure a greater diversity of climate; he is found in all latitudes, and can pass from the equator to the pole without material inconvenience. His mind is no less capable of forming itself to his political situation, with very little assistance from learning or moral discipline. The great mass of mankind who are born to poverty and toil, are generally as satisfied with their lot, from being early accustomed to it, as those who occupy the superior ranks of life appear to be with theirs.

Nor will oppression itself, superadded to daily drudgery, totally embitter human life, if the yoke is not at once so galling and unremitting, as that the bruises it inflicts have no time to heal.

Should we look into those despotic states where acts of extreme violence are rare, we might possibly find, that the bulk of the people pass their lives with tolerable ease and quiet. The peasants whose abode is at the foot of Vesuvius, although they often hear the mountain rumble, and see it now and then emit volumes of smoke, mingled with fire, and sometimes perhaps are sprinkled with its ashes; yet knowing that those eruptions which endanger their lives and property are used to happen only after long intervals, they will continue to cultivate their vineyards and pursue their various occupations with as little fear or uneasiness, as if they dwelt at a hundred leagues distance.

Again: The most stormy periods in these latter ages have been tempered and illuminated with many generous displays of humanity and courtesy, which I suppose

pose no mind is capable of reviewing without some emotions of delight and admiration. The noble behaviour of the renowned and gallant son of our Edward the Third towards the French king, who became his prisoner at the battle of Poitiers, must, at the time, have greatly softened the anguish of defeat, and darted a cheering ray through the general horrors of war; and has since found a sympathy in every heart. The conduct of the duke of Guise, during the intestine broils of France, towards the prince of Condé *, who fell into his hands at the battle of Dreux, could not fail of producing the same effects. A more recent and do-

* He was nobly entertained by the duke at his own table, and admitted to share the same bed, though before they had lived upon terms of the bitterest enmity. See Thuanus.

meistic instance of modest heroism, now occurring to my recollection, and in my opinion no less worthy of being celebrated, I shall take the liberty to add on this occasion. In the late American contest, when a large body of the British forces were compelled to yield up their arms at a certain place assigned, the Americans, to spare the feelings of the vanquished, kept closely within their lines during this humiliating ceremony; an act which shewed these brave colonists deserving of the independance for which they fought. In general, the humanity with which wars have been waged in modern times opposed to their former ferocity, affords matter of consolatory reflection amidst all the evils that necessarily attend them.

The great and good characters which are formed and eminently displayed in a turbulent period, is an advantage growing
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ing out of public calamity which every man is called upon to improve to his own profit. Had there been no civil commotions at the time of the reformation, the world would have wanted the illustrious example of John Frederic, elector of Saxony, who bravely stood forth the defender of the new doctrines, and whose unshaken magnanimity, both in prosperous and adverse fortune, ranked him, says Thuanus, amongst the greatest of mankind, even in the judgment of his enemies *. Had not the labouring cause of political and religious liberty called forth the heroic Gustavus Adolphus, we should not have been told that

* When he was made prisoner by the emperor, and practised with in the article of religion, he nobly declared that death was to him more eligible, than to trifle with God or man by betraying his sentiments through a mean worldly policy.

upon his debarking in the isle of Ussedom, at the commencement of the Germanic war, he fell upon his knees in the presence of his army, and then turning round to his officers, observed, with his usual animation, that *a good christian would not make a bad soldier* *. To the civil wars of France we owe the example of Coligny's invincible fortitude, always great in his misfortunes, but never greater than at his death. Compare him with Cato in his last moments, and you will perceive the infinite disparity †. I have
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* Harte's Life of Gustavus, Vol. I. p. 153.

† Having long combated in defence of the reformed religion, and from every defeat returning to the charge more formidable than he was before, he fell at last by treachery who could not be subdued by arms. Deceived by the oaths and flatteries of his prince, Charles the Ninth, he was butchered at the massacre of Paris, together with thousands of his brethren. Just before this bloody tragedy

selected these instances, because the present age has need to be admonished, that there is no such invincible opposition between piety and true greatness, as some maintain, and others are ready to imagine.

To these considerations we may add the uncertain event of wars and national

tragedy he observed to those around him, "I perceive they are about to take my life; this event I have long foreseen without fear, and am now prepared to meet it with resignation. I think myself happy to die in full possession of my faculties, to die in God, whose grace supports me by a sure hope of eternal life." Having scarcely dismissed his friends out of concern for their safety, the assassin broke into his apartment, and asking him, "Art thou Coligni?" "I am," he replied, with an air of composure; adding, "Young man, thou oughtest to respect my grey hairs;—but do what thou intendest." Immediately he received the dagger in his bosom. For this account we are indebted to the impartial Thuanus.

commotions, both in their immediate and more remote consequences, often so very different from all that the greatest human sagacity would have judged probable; which should equally serve to check our presumption and to moderate our fears, should neither suffer us to be vainly elated with success, nor *to despair of the public* in the most threatening conjuncture; much less to be played upon by every political prognosticator, to dance when he is pleased to pipe, or when he mourns, to sink down in hopeless dejection.

Further; a serious contemplation of the general vanity of the world, whatever external form it assumes, may, by lessening our expectations from it, at least help to mitigate the anguish of disappointment, which we all know is one of the bitterest ingredients in the cup of human misery. Proofs of this vanity
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urge us on every side, and at intervals make impression on every mind; yet men generally continue to hug the illusion they are under till it is torn from them by the hand of death. When Henry the Fourth of France was murdered by Ravallac, just at the time he was entering upon his great enterprize, which it is supposed was intended to reduce all Europe into one republic, his last words are recorded to have been, *Ce n'est rien*; " 'Tis nothing;" which I am inclined to understand as expressing his sense, at that awful moment, of the vanity that cleaves to all worldly projects and hopes; a sentiment naturally arising from his situation, and which almost every man feels the truth of when he comes to die.

As man, when he is called from this world, enters into an unchangeable state of happiness or misery, reason tells him,
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that he ought to value every thing on this side the grave according to the help it may afford him to avoid the one and secure the other. When he has learned this lesson, and is made thoroughly sensible of its importance, he will look on human life with different eyes than he did before.

Those things which are generally regarded with dread, such as sickness, poverty and disgrace, he will contemplate under a less frightful aspect, as serving to weaken his present attachments, and induce a serious consideration of what will be hereafter; and those things which are generally the objects of eager competition, will rather excite his caution than his envy, as by drawing men's affections to this life, they diminish their concern for the next.

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When in like manner he views the affairs of nations in the light of futurity, he will see them to be of little importance, except as they relate to the interests of true religion and rational liberty; which are here placed together, as the latter is generally necessary to the success of the former. Whether the white or the red rose has the prevalence, whether a certain province or branch of commerce is in the hands of one nation or another, he will regard as matters of small consequence in themselves considered. All wars of trade or ambition, further than as they affect the interests above-named, will excite in him no other emotion than of pity or indignation for human weakness or wickedness.

It is too much for any one to hazard his person or his peace every time princes or nations shall think fit to quarrel with one another: It is enough if he is ready

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to share his sympathy and undertake his part of the service, whenever the essential interests of mankind are in question.

From military feuds let us turn our attention for a moment to literary contentions, and try, as in the former case, if we can discover any diminishing circumstances, which may help us to view them with less disturbance.

It is disgraceful to human reason to find how much learned controversy has been lavished upon mere words and names. I remember to have read of a notable dispute between the university of Paris and the *College Royal*, whether *quisquis* and *quanquam* should be pronounced *kiskis* and *kankam*, or not; the university contending for the affirmative and the college for the negative. At length the matter grew so serious that it came under the cognizance of the Parliament, who, after
due

due deliberation, wisely determined to leave both parties to their own discretion *. How many learned strifes are there in the world that signify as little as *kiskis* and *kankam* !

These wars of grammarians and critics, were it not for the waste of time and talents which they occasion, might divert a sober man in a weary hour ; to see such *labor ineptiarum*, so many *difficiles nugæ*, the arrantest trifles treated with such airs of importance, such eagerness of opposition, and pompous declamation. One might suppose the safety of the country depended upon settling a reading in Virgil or Horace, and that a happy emendation merited a public triumph. “ The *glory*,” says Sanadon, “ of this correction, [namely of *si* for *sic*, in one of the odes of Horace,] is due to Rodellius †.”

* See Querelles litteraires, tom. 2. p. 121. 3.

† See Francis's Horace, Lib. 1. Carm. 16.

Among the subjects of philosophical debate, it is a consolation to reflect, that many of them are merely frivolous, many too abstruse for vulgar comprehension, and not a few both one and the other. Besides it must be remembered, that in these intellectual collisions light is sometimes struck out which leads to useful discoveries.

In the agitation of political questions, as they generally come nearer to our interests, there is more need to watch over our peace. No wise man will venture upon these seas unless compelled by his duty ; and should his situation in life require him to take a part in such discussions, he will be careful to conduct himself with moderation, making every equitable concession to his opponents, and maintaining a prudent jealousy of his own opinions and party.

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It is a relief amidst such controversies to consider, that by a lively display of the natural and unalienable rights of man on the one hand, and the necessity of government and subordination on the other, they may equally serve to check the tyranny of rulers, and enforce a due obedience on the part of the subject.

It is true indeed that political opinions are often no more than the pretexts of interest or ambition, of men out of place who endeavour to supplant those who are in; yet even in this case we must not forget, that in the present corrupt state, where all power is in so much danger of abuse, no free government is likely to continue long without a vigilant opposition; and if true patriots step not forward to undertake this service, it may be better to have it performed by others who falsely assume the title, than to see it absolutely abandoned.

Amidst this noisy contentious world it might have been expected, that the church at least would have proved a calm and quiet refuge; yet the case is often much otherwise. Besides its tossings from without, this harbour is subject to many internal commotions of its own; it is the best however we can meet with on this side heaven.

I shall here assume what I suppose will easily be granted, that notwithstanding the various heresies which from time to time have rent the peace of christian societies, of those differences which have divided truly good men, the greater part have been of small moment, and the rest more in name than in reality.

He therefore who duly consults his religious quiet, will direct his attention to those points in which he observes humble and pious christians are essentially agreed,
and

and will studiously endeavour to avoid all nominal and unimportant controversy.

Should any infidel here ask insultingly, And what are those points in which good christians are thus agreed? I will tell him a few. They are thus agreed in holding the insufficiency of mere reason to instruct us in the great concern of religion: he holds the contrary. They are thus agreed in expecting remission and divine acceptance only through a mediator: this expectation he renounces. And lastly, in order to restore to our nature its capacity of true happiness by the renovation of its moral powers, they are thus agreed in holding the necessity of a divine agency: which he derides. In these points they are in agreement as to the substance, though they may differ as to the mode in which they choose to conceive or express them.

Again, it will be useful to consider, that parties in religion (as well as in government,) may be attended with considerable advantages, to put in balance with their evils. They may not only serve to keep one another in check, which is sometimes necessary to the preservation of general liberty; but also to kindle a laudable emulation, which may happily contribute to the advancement both of liberty, truth, and piety. The apostle Paul endeavours to call forth this spirit in his countrymen the Jews, by displaying the progress of the gospel among the gentiles *.

Since the time of Luther it must, I think, be allowed, that the Roman catholic clergy have been less corrupt in doctrine, more exemplary in their lives, and more distinguished for learning than

* Rom: xi. 14.

before that period, and that this, in part at least, may justly be considered as the effect of protestantism. By observing the eminent literary abilities and fervent unsophisticated piety of many of the reformers, and by the free discussion to which the doctrine and worship they had received by tradition were now subjected, they appear in some degree to have been roused from the long slumber of superstition and ignorance into which they had fallen, and gradually led to make concessions and qualifying explanations, which cannot in every instance be imputed to a base design of ensnaring their opponents, without a gross offence to charity and probability.

In the war to which christianity is exposed from without, I will touch a few particulars, which may help to allay the fears and encourage the hopes of its disciples, notwithstanding all the triumph of unbelievers.

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To hear the language of these men, it might be supposed that victory had decided so entirely in their favour, as scarcely to leave room to expect that even the name of christianity would long continue ; and it must be acknowledged that no skill or exertion has been wanting on their part to procure its total extinction.

It has been said, that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church. Aware of the truth of this, and not merely for want of power, its modern adversaries condemn all recourse to fire and sword, and have commonly made their assaults in the less violent way of argument and raillery.

What was observed of Cæsar, that he came *fober and collected to the overthrow of the republic*, may in some measure be applied to those who advance under an
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appearance of reason to the destruction of the christian system. The deist, by discoursing learnedly on the sufficiency of the light of nature, endeavours to set aside the necessity of revelation. The sceptic, by displaying the obscurity in which all things are involved, would infer that our wisdom is to believe nothing. And the atheist, speculating on fate and chance, matter and motion, tries to pull up all religion by the roots, under a shew of scientific wisdom.

The way of raillery is no less employed in this contest, and often with still more success. A noble writer * seems to have been of opinion, that if instead of a serious opposition this method had been used against the gospel at its first publication, it would never have obtained footing in the world. Whether the hint

* Lord Shaftsbury.

was partly taken from him I know not ; however it is certain since his time this engine has been played with singular industry.

Yet after all these assaults, whether grave or ludicrous, the truth of christianity remains unshaken ; for as it stands confirmed by direct and positive evidence amounting to the highest moral demonstration, no objections or raileries can ever affect the main cause.

It is an excellent observation of a profound writer, the truth of which he demonstrates at length, " That all objections against revealed religion, as distinguished from objections against its evidence, are vain and frivolous *."

One great artifice of unbelievers is to confound christianity with superstition,

* See Butler's Analogy, Part 2. Ch. 3.

and then to triumph over both, when the victory is obtained only over the latter. In this the church of Rome has afforded them much advantage. Among the idle legends of monkish visions they would comprehend the most authentic records of divine revelation. Under the censure of unprofitable rigours and austerities, they would include all that self-denial which the gospel prescribes, and on which depends the very existence of true religion in the world. From the inefficacy of human penances and satisfactions, they take occasion to expatiate in favour of virtue as the only meritorious sacrifice. From the pompous puerilities of popish ceremonies, they would draw contempt on all external worship. To discredit the mysteries of christianity, they will, perhaps, ostentatiously expose the absurdity of transubstantiation, and then be ready to exclaim with a celebrated

brated Arabian metaphysician *, *If the Christians first make their God, and then eat him, let my soul remain with the philosophers.* Yet what have all these errors and depravations, or a thousand more, to do with the pure, primitive, unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ? Nothing.

As therefore these insidious attempts have no real force, except as they bear upon the corruptions of christianity, it may be hoped they will eventually conduce to its advancement.

Let us consider a little their effects on Roman catholic countries, which make up so large a portion of Christendom.

One effect undoubtedly is the propagation of infidelity, by which I here understand a rejection of all revealed re-

* Averroes.

tion. This however can hardly be supposed to happen unless among persons of some learning, who in every nation are comparatively few. The mind, when rude and unlettered, is known to be strongly biassed in favour of supernatural discoveries, as it is to whatever is extraordinary and marvellous; a smattering of science sets it too much the other way; while true wisdom gives it a due direction.

It seems therefore improbable that the bulk of any people whatever should become absolute sceptics and unbelievers; men who of all others are least likely to be wrought upon by reason or religion; and we may indulge some hope, that even the generality of the French nation at this time, are rather wavering catholics than settled infidels; and that in their present fluctuation of opinion they are less indisposed to the reception of pure
 6 christianity,

Christianity, than while they retained a bigotted attachment to popish errors and superstitions.

Although the design of our modern infidels is manifestly to spread deism, and even atheism, I am willing partly to consider them as pioneers preparing a freer course for the gospel, by removing some of those obstacles which superstition and bigotry had thrown in the way. I would consider Voltaire as a precursor of protestantism among his countrymen, by weakening the authority of the church of Rome, by exposing her corruptions, and by exciting a spirit of enquiry, which however dangerous when it runs to excess, is highly serviceable to the cause of truth when temperately exercised.

Should the late convulsions in France, for which she is not a little indebted to her philosophers, terminate in a system
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of rational liberty, including, as I conceive every such system will do, a general toleration in matters of religion, it seems not improbable that the seeds of protestantism which remain scattered in that country would soon shoot up and multiply, that teachers would quickly arise from among themselves, and reformed churches spread themselves through the land; and that volatile nation which has been the first in vanity and impiety, and the great corrupter of Europe, might in no very distant period, thus become an example of sober manners, and unadulterated christianity.

By such an example, a spirit of reformation might find its way into other catholic countries, and gradually recover them to the purity of the gospel both in its faith and worship.

These conjectures, although the event should prove them to have been erroneous, correspond at least to the doctrine we would here inculcate, namely, That in order to peace of mind we should learn to view every thing on its best side, and in the fairest light. Where nature has bestowed this turn of thinking, it is an inheritance beyond all outward possessions; and where it is wanting, it should be studiously sought as the most valuable acquisition of reason and philosophy; still more should we seek it as a fruit of that divine charity which *thinketh no evil, believeth all things, and hopeth all things.*

Such, however, is the scene which the world presents to us, that no man who duly consults his true interest and satisfaction, will dwell upon it more than is necessary for the regulation of his own conduct. Whichever way he directs his
view

view he is sure to meet with evil of every kind, no less to the hazard of his virtue than to the disturbance of his peace; besides, without a strong mind, and a more than ordinary degree of piety, while he is curious to contemplate the present disordered state of things, he may find himself unhappily betrayed into a secret arraignment of the divine proceedings.

As for me, says the Psalmist, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped; for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

Wisdom would therefore teach us, to direct our enquiries rather inward than outward; instead of useless speculations upon the world, to pursue those which may lead us into a better acquaintance with ourselves, with God, and the world to come.

* Ps. lxxiii.

It would *ask us also to leave*
 and compact *Call Gilt*
 duties will allow;
 would only be to *Miss S.*
 to the arrows of f
 trials and temptations, and at the same
 time to abridge our present comfort, and
 obstruct our future happiness.

A taste for retirement, for calm occupations and simple pleasures, ought diligently to be cultivated by every one who is ambitious of solid contentment, or who aspires after the dignity of independence. Sir William Temple, in a letter to the King, tells him, that should the court not suit him, *he knows the way back to his garden.* For want of this power of abstraction, or as Pascal says, *because so few can sit quiet in their own chamber,* the world is filled with so much competition and uproar.

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After all, whatever the infidelity of the age may insinuate or affirm to the contrary, and I repeat it again as a sentiment that I wish to be ever impressed upon my own mind, and to leave impressed upon the mind of the reader, *Religion is our only sure refuge in life and death.* All human power and prudence, all the policy of government and the wisdom of philosophy, can provide no adequate defence against the evils, present and future, to which we stand exposed. *The name of the Lord is the only impregnable tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe *.*

* Prov. xviii. 20.

THE END,